



# THE INDEPENDENT

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**INSIDE THE  
NETWORK  
THE MILLENNIUM  
WE BEAT THE C**

## After the IRA, Sinn Fein's London move

Anthony Bevin  
David McKittrick and  
Jason Benetto

On a day of London chaos caused by IRA bomb scares, Sinn Fein, the terrorist group's political wing, yesterday announced that it was planning a move to Westminster.

Martin McGuinness, who is the Sinn Fein candidate in Mid-Ulster and stands a good chance of winning, told BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme that his party expected to win three seats in the new Parliament.

"We are prepared to go to Westminster. We are prepared to represent our people, and I think we will be able to do that quite effectively," Mr McGuinness said. It is understood that Sinn Fein is planning to open an office in London as part of political drive to raise the party's profile in Westminster.

He said that the party was very hopeful that there would be three MPs elected - himself, Gerry Adams in West Belfast, and Pat Doherty, in West Tyrone - with a "very strong mandate".

While that did not mean that they would take their places in the Commons - an action banned by the party constitution - he said they would be making a move to London.

Vast areas of London were girdlocked yesterday after a fresh series of IRA bomb threats closed key roadways, railway stations and airports in the South-east.

Hundreds of thousands of travellers had to endure hours of delays in the capital's worst ever traffic jam. The IRA again used the tactic of "maximum disruption, minimum risk" with a spate of early morning coded bomb warnings. Unlike Friday's attack in

### Parties agree on polls

The Conservatives and Labour last night accepted that the opinion polls were not accurately reflecting the real difference between the parties and said that research in yesterday's *Independent* was nearer the mark.

John Major said in Leeds: "The *Independent* interestingly enough actually chose to go out to the marginal seats, knock on a few doors and talk to people itself rather

than just rely on opinion polls." Our survey of constituencies found that contrary to the Labour lead of 14-19 points in the polls, the parties were much closer and that the Labour lead in target Tory seats was soft and could change.

Senior Labour sources said last night that the findings did not much concern them, as their own polling suggested a lead of "more than 10 points - but less than 20".

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**THE INDEPENDENT  
election '97**

which two devices exploded in Leeds and Doncaster, yesterday's operation was a hoax and no bombs were found.

At the height of the morning rush hour alert Paddington, King's Cross, St Pancras, Baker Street and Charing Cross mainline and tube stations were closed and the surrounding areas evacuated.

On the M25 there was a 10-mile jam and routes into the London from the west were gridlocked. Gatwick part of Heathrow, London, and Stansted airports were also closed. There were also bomb alerts at Dover harbour and the busy Watford junction rail station.

The success of the IRA's disruptive tactics has raised fears that the terrorists may target polling day next week. Last night, David Veness, the Metropolitan Police's assistant commissioner with responsibility for specialist opera-

tions, revealed that anti-terrorist plans have been drawn up to try and prevent voting disruption on 1 May. He acknowledged that the general election represented a "significant security challenge", but said he was confident that it could be protected.

While declining to provide details Mr Veness said police had been planning how to combat any threat for a considerable period. He rejected suggestions that the emergency services over-reacted to yesterday's threats, stressing that they had to err on the side of caution.

Mr McGuinness said in yesterday's radio interview that there was no question of Sinn Fein MPs swearing or affirming allegiance to the Queen, a statutory requirement for all MPs wishing to sit, speak and vote in the Commons.

"And we don't recognise the right of the British Government to

rule over this part of Ireland. Republican sources in Northern Ireland say that any Sinn Fein MPs can be expected to travel to London more frequently than did party president Gerry Adams during his 1983-92 spell as MP for West Belfast.

Sinn Fein has for over a decade been in the business of digging itself into the political system, and probably has more offices scattered over Northern Ireland than any of the other more conventional parties. There are also offices in various parts of the Irish Republic while in recent years others have opened in Washington and Brussels.

But the Sinn Fein constitution strictly forbids participation at Westminster, with candidates required to take the following oath: "I ... freely and solemnly declare that if elected I will not sit in, nor take part in, the proceedings of the Westminster or partitionist six-county parliaments."

This requirement could only be removed by a two-thirds vote at a Sinn Fein *ard-fheis* (annual conference) and there are no signs that the party is gearing up to abolish a tradition of abstentionism which extends back for decades.

Within those bounds, however, the republicans have for more than a decade adopted a more participative approach. This has seen them both contesting any and all elections and in holding meetings with almost any person or element which seeks contact with them.

According to one republican source: "It makes sense for Sinn Fein to consciously try to build relationships with parties, to win friends and be prepared to argue and debate with anybody."

South-east chaos, page 4

Michael Catchpole (vase with flower) and Andrew Neibauer (table), painted by Australian artist Anthony Chiappa, combine to form the work *Sunflower* on display in Adelphi yesterday. We have no particular excuse for using this picture today. On the other hand, neither of the participants are British politicians. Photograph: Andrew Durbin/APP

## No escape from privatisation for NHS

Jeremy Lauance  
Health Editor

Fifty years after the National Health Service was founded, hospitals are facing privatisation whenever party forms the next government, health-service managers warned yesterday.

Private companies are poised to take over the running of NHS trusts, including the provision of clinical care, as a condition of investing in the new buildings that the service urgently needs, the Institute of Health Services Management said. Although care would remain free to patients it would be delivered by doctors and nurses employed by private companies.

Fears that NHS hospitals

would be privatised have been raised ever since the introduction of the NHS internal market in 1991 - and constantly denied. Now managers say it is inevitable because of cuts in public funding for new hospitals - amounting to 22 per cent between 1994-99 - to which both main parties are committed.

A report commissioned by the institute, from Mearns Management Consultancy, said efforts to replace the lost funds with private investment under the Government's Private Finance Initiative have failed because private investors fear the risks outweigh the potential rewards.

Under the scheme, launched in 1992, private companies design and build new hospitals and

manage support services such as maintenance of the NHS internal market and cleaning. Now managers say it is inevitable because of cuts in public funding for new hospitals - amounting to 22 per cent between 1994-99 - to which both main parties are committed.

The report says that NHS managers remain unconvinced that the scheme can be made to work. It says NHS trusts are demanding "unaffordable gitz" - new buildings, and health authorities are failing to make proper estimates of future demand. There are also worries about the legality of the scheme.

A second report by re-

searchers at St George's Hospital Medical School says that hospital trusts are cutting back on the number of beds included in new schemes to make them more affordable which will lead to a "shrunken NHS". The report, to be published in the British Medical Journal this week says patient throughput would have to increase to unrealistic levels to cope with the reduction in beds.

Karen Caines, director of the institute, said: "Both Labour and the Tories are saying they are looking to increase private investment in the NHS. If so, given the dismal performance of the private finance initiative so far, they will have to look at how they can improve it."

Ms Caines said the scheme's track record in the NHS had been one of "delay, bureaucracy, and immense frustration". It was launched without proper thought about the process, and few people understood the implications, she said. "If private finance is to be the way forward then the new government in May needs to act urgently ... to make the system work."

Professor Chris Ham, head of the Institute of Health Services Management at the University of Birmingham, said there was an "inexorable logic" behind the private-finance initiative. "Investors who put their finance at risk will want to have a big say in how the hospitals are run. That will mean a seat on

the board ... and a say in the appointment of consultants. If they are not performing successfully the investors will be bound to step in to change the management or the doctors. The end of the route will be increasing privatisation."

Michael Foot, the former Labour leader and biographer of Aneurin Bevan, said the founder of the NHS would be turning in his grave. "It is the thin end of the wedge. Bevan fought on many fronts at the same time against people who said his plan for the NHS was the wrong way to do it, and that if it took on too much it wouldn't work. But it wasn't true. There are better ways of saving money, through preventive medicine."

## Five minute 20 second break pots £165,000

Guy Hodgson

Mike Tyson has collected money quickly in the boxing ring and even Britain's horizontal heavyweight Frank Bruno has picked up hundreds of thousands of pounds for a few moments in the ring.

The frame, the 14th in his 10-6 win over Mick Price, put O'Sullivan through to a second round and a step nearer a potential quarter-final against Stephen Hendry who also is hoping to create a landmark of his own by becoming the first man to win the modern world championship seven times.

"It was unbelievable to do this in the world champi-

onships," O'Sullivan, who is ranked eighth in the world, said. "I haven't had a maximum in ages, even in practice, so to get it at the Crucible is fantastic. There is only one venue as far as snooker is concerned."

"You could add, and his supporters probably will do, that there is only one Ronnie O'Sullivan. The 21-year-old from Chigwell, Essex, compiled his first 100 break at the age of 10 and immediately broke Hendry's record of 36 consecutive victories after turning professional in 1992. He has frequently found the fame that comes with such exploits hard

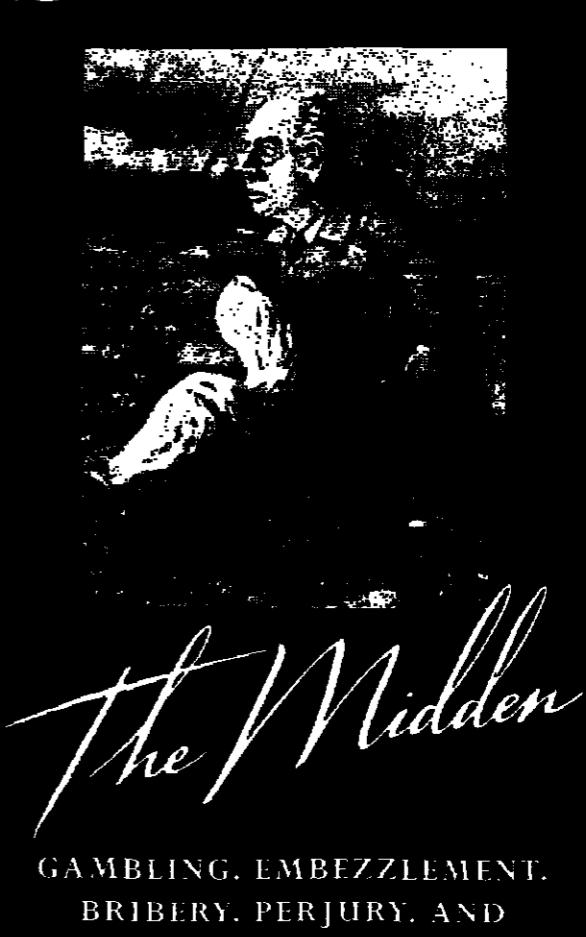
to handle, however, and at last year's world championships he assaulted a press officer for which he was fined £20,000 and ordered to make a "voluntary" donation of £10,000 to charity.

He was also given a two-year ban, suspended for two years conditional on his good conduct. O'Sullivan becomes only the fourth man to record a maximum in the world championships, following Cliff Thorburn in 1983, Jimmy White in 1992, and Stephen Hendry in 1995. It is the 20th official 147 compiled in a major tournament.

Winning potential, page 28



## TOM SHARPE



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## significant shorts

**£2m for cancer patients after radiotherapy blunder**

A £2m settlement has been agreed with almost 100 victims of a hospital blunder that resulted in cancer patients receiving the wrong doses of radiation, it was announced yesterday.

More than 1,000 patients at the North Staffordshire Royal Infirmary in Stoke-on-Trent received incorrect treatment after a machine was set up wrongly for nine years.

Lawyers for 95 of the victims and their relatives announced yesterday that their five-year battle for compensation had ended with the agreement for £2m, plus "substantial" costs. The patients were given lower-than-prescribed doses of radiation after a computer miscalculated the amounts they should receive.

After the blunder came to light in 1992 the hospital admitted there had been a fault but had disputed whether it had caused harm. A report later said that out of 1,075 patients who had received wrong doses, more than 400 had since died and another 91 had suffered a recurrence of their cancers. It also said it was virtually impossible to say whether those who had died would have survived if it had not been for the mistake.

James Evans, chairman of the group of solicitors who fought the case, said survivors and relatives of some patients who had died would be told over the next few days exactly how much compensation they would receive. But he added: "No financial compensation can be adequate for the trauma they suffered."

**Blackout in southern Scotland**

Thousands of homes and businesses in southern Scotland were without electricity yesterday after a leaking pipe disrupted supplies.

Around 10,000 customers were cut off at around 7.30am in and around Kirkcudbright and Castle Douglas, Scottish Power said. The disruption was caused by a leaking pipe which flooded the Tongland sub-station in Dumfries and Galloway. Twenty schools in the area were closed for the day and social services such as meals-on-wheels were delayed. Scottish Power engineers managed to provide alternative power supplies for 7,000 customers. A spokesman for the power company said yesterday it was not known when the remaining 4,000 customers still without electricity would be switched back on.

**Tracie Andrews pleads 'not guilty'**

Tracie Andrews, the woman accused of the roadside murder of her fiancé Lee Harvey, appeared in court yesterday to formally enter a not-guilty plea.

Ms Andrews, 27, spoke only twice during the 20 minute hearing at Birmingham Crown Court to confirm her name and answer "not guilty" when asked how she pleaded to the charge that she murdered her boyfriend on 10 December last year. Mr Harvey, 25, was found stabbed to death by the side of a country lane at Coopers Hill in Alvechurch, Worcestershire. Ms Andrews' bail, with strict conditions, was renewed and the case was adjourned for trial - probably later this year.

**Woman-hating rapist jailed**

A man who hated women, and who had a "game plan" to murder four females, was sent indefinitely to Rampton high-security psychiatric hospital yesterday following a series of frenzied attacks.

Rodney Barnes targeted and stalked women on their own to terrify, rob or sexually attack them. Police discovered he also had a list of 30 high-profile potential victims. Barnes was described by one psychiatrist as "probably the most dangerous person I have seen in my professional career". He told police he wanted "to see out my game plan" - the murder of four female relatives, including his mother and former wife. Barnes, 34, from Solihull, West Midlands, admitted a rape, an indecent assault, seven robberies, an attempted robbery and a theft in six weeks, starting on 5 March last year.

**More strikes for firefighters**

The dispute between fire officers and Essex County Council has worsened after the Fire Brigades Union announced two further strikes, despite warnings that any further industrial action will lead to the suspension of all crews. After a 24-hour strike on Saturday by Essex fire officers, army Green Goddess fire-engines and their military crews were again put on standby yesterday during a four-hour stoppage. The FBU say members will stage a 24-hour walkout on 29 April followed by a nine-hour stoppage on 2 May. The union is protesting at £1.5m in spending cuts which, they say, will cost at least 52 officers their jobs and put the public at risk. Simon Reeve

**Relief at end of loo-roll battle**

Andrex left the High Court much relieved yesterday as the three-day battle of the loo rolls came to a close. Mr Justice Laddie flushed Nouvelle Quilted's latest promotional pack down the pan on the grounds that it could be mistaken for an Andrex product. In what the judge described as a "difficult" case of "passing-off", Kimberly-Clark was granted an injunction banning Fort Sterling, manufacturers of Nouvelle, from using the Andrex trade mark without adequately distinguishing the two products. Clare Germer

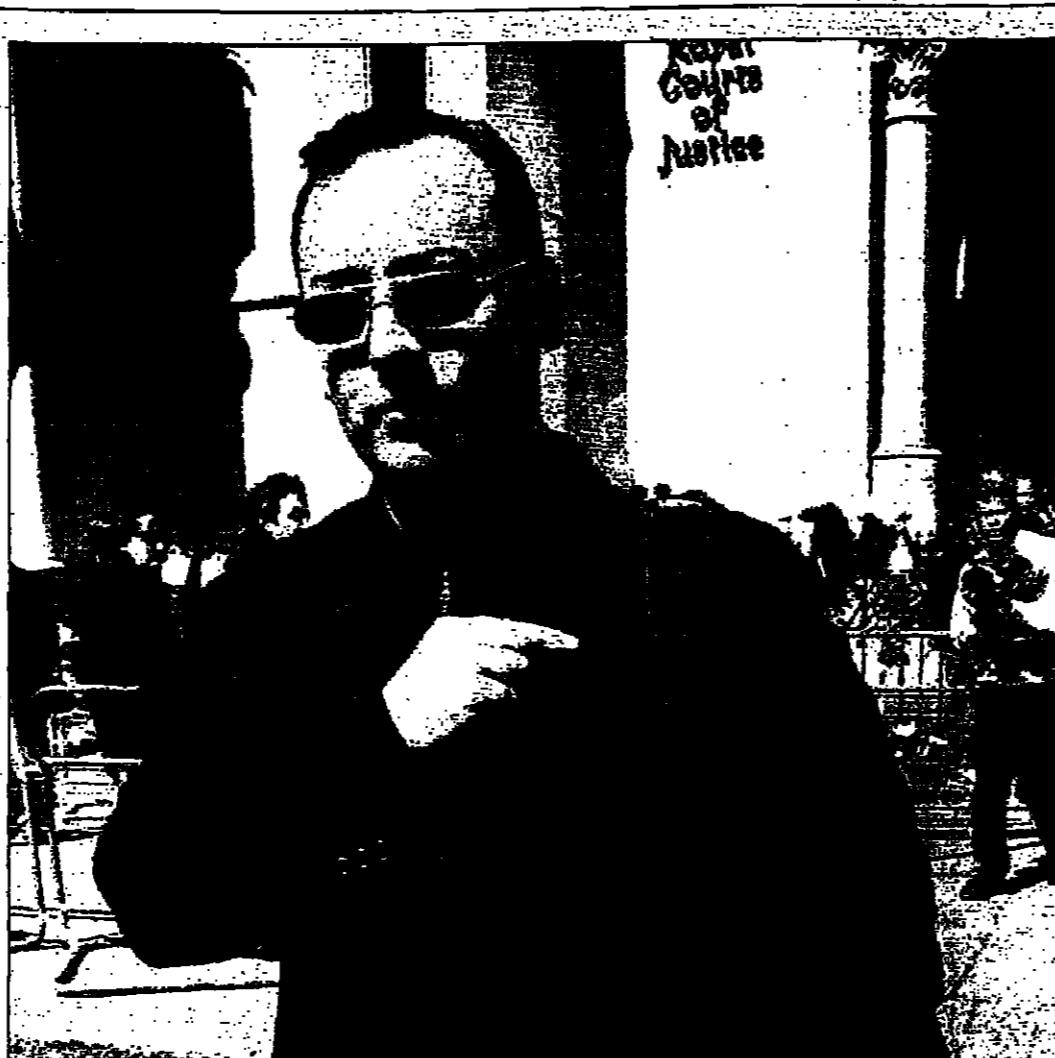
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## people



Boy George: His claims of a relationship are false, says Kirk Brandon (Photograph: PA)

**Musician takes Boy George to court over gay allegation**

Boy George, the former star of the pop group Culture Club, became "obsessed" with a male musician and tried to "out" him as a homosexual after inventing a relationship between the two men. The High Court was told yesterday.

Kirk Brandon, best remembered for his time with the "Goth-rock" group Spear of Destiny and *Theatre of Hate*, is suing George, now a highly successful DJ, for malicious falsehood.

The legal action relates to claims of a relationship between the two men in George's 1995 autobiography *Take It Like A Man* and a CD called *Cherishless and Beauty*, which contains a song about Brandon, titled "Unfinished Business".

Boy George states in his book: "Sleeping with Kirk wasn't sex, it was absolute love." But Brandon told the court that George developed a crush on him, and that he eventually became an obsession. He said he was not gay, never had an affair with George, and that the two men had been friends for 10 years.

George, 38, has denied the claims, saying he possessed nearly three years ago. He was never in touch with Brandon again, he said.

All of a sudden people started to write about us and say we were gay and that we were in a relationship and that they were in a relationship.

**Anger at Charles' snub to academy for inventors**

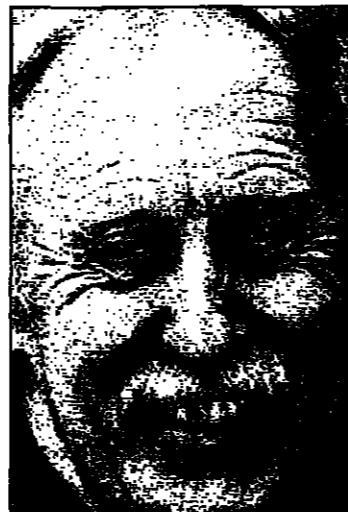
Trevor Baylis (right), award-winning inventor of the clockwork radio, has vented his frustration on behalf of Britain's unsung inventors, after Prince Charles turned down a request to be patron of the Royal Academy of Inventors.

Despite nearly two years' lobbying, Mr Baylis has failed to find any funding - including lottery money - to support his dream. His attempt to enlist the Prince, whom he met last July at Buckingham Palace, was refused on the basis that he is already patron to 400 organisations, and has to turn down the majority of requests.

You can get lottery money for the arts - they say it's our culture. But people have to realise that invention is part of British culture too - it goes back to the Industrial Revolution, which produced so many ideas. Yet inventors never get support from government," he said.

A Royal Academy of Inventors would cost about £2.5m annually for the first three years, he reckons, after which it could be self-financing. The aim would be to offer advice and funding to people who come to it with ideas.

"We're trying to give credit to people with ideas, who presently

**Billionaire's gift to Cambridge**

The billionaire who made his money in milk and fruit juice cartons is pouring £2.5m into a new mathematics centre at Cambridge University.

The donation, by Swedish-born Hans Rausing, co-founder of the packaging firm TetraPak, will fund around one tenth of the project, the university said yesterday.

Mr Rausing, 71, Britain's second richest man, after being knocked from the pinnacle of the wealth league this year, was reportedly inspired to make the gift by an enthusiasm for cosmology and the work of Cambridge professor Stephen Hawking.

Cambridge owes a debt of gratitude to punitively Swedish tax laws, which prompted Mr Rausing to leave his home country in the 1980s and settle in Britain.

He and his brother, Gad, became richer than the Queen in 1995 thanks to their carton - an invention inspired by their grandmother's sausage-making, in which meat was squeezed into a skin and pinched at both ends.

Since selling his stake in the Swiss-based packaging group Tetra Laval last year for almost £250m, he has retired to his West Sussex home, set in a deer park, and indulged his passion for vintage cars.

Charles Arthur

are portrayed as fools and jackasses - whereas there's government money for people who put dead sheep in formaldehyde or makes piles of bricks, as long as they call it 'art'. We want to start a renaissance of invention."

Mr Baylis developed a wind-up radio which does not need batteries, for the African market. His company, Baygen, now manufactures 20,000 radios daily and is opening two new factories. But it was only after he allowed the idea to be shown on the BBC TV programme, *Tomorrow's World*, that he could get financial backing.

Charles Arthur

Charles

# Scratch cards gamble on a relaunch

Michael Streeter

Lottery organiser Camelot yesterday confirmed a plan effectively to relaunch its scratch cards after a fall in sales, and possibly to offer participants a chance to take part in a television game show.

Sales of the cards, which began after the successful launch of the Saturday draw, have slumped from a peak of more

than £44m to a low of £15m in the first week of this month.

Although details have still to be hammered out, the campaign will probably introduce a variety of innovative games to attract new punters, and also give players the opportunity to compete for prizes in a televised show.

A clue to the new approach is shown by the success of Camelot's Pigs Might Fly

scratchcard, started last summer, which offered relatively low prizes of £10,000 but which gave a higher than normal chance of winning – one in four against one in five.

Lower prizes but with a higher chance of success, involving "humorous" formats, are seen as the way forward. Christmas bonus cards have also proved popular.

A spokesman for Camelot

yesterday confirmed it was considering new ideas for scratch cards but was cautious about committing itself to specific ideas. He said: "We are always looking at new and innovative marketing initiatives for both the National Lottery game and Instant.

We will continue to consider new game ideas with more variety to broaden appeal."

He added: "The Instant brand still outsells the top three

impulse brands in the country – Coca Cola, Walkers and KitKat – and 10 million people play regularly each week."

The company points out that in other countries such as the US, instant games have slumped after launches, before recovering to gain a larger slice of the market.

If a new television show is launched, it is likely to be offered to the BBC which has a

contract to show the lottery draws until this autumn. Cards would have a separate panel to be scratched which would give the purchaser the chance to appear in the programme and win a variety of prizes.

Camelot claims that its advertising and marketing for scratchcards has produced a "halo effect" for the sector as a whole – boosting sales from £43m to £100m a year. Around

half of the UK population are thought to play instant at some time, with one in ten playing on a weekly basis.

Company sources said the fall in sales was not a "disaster" but that it needed to maintain or increase them so that, overall, commercial targets could be reached.

One said: "We did predict the market would drop but we did not want it to fall any lower."

The fall in sales can be traced back to early last year when the main lottery game offered its first double-rollover jackpot. Other scratchcard operators are thought to have seen similar falls in sales.

Another option is for Camelot to eschew altogether one-off prizes and instead offer regular monthly payments, as is done already in other parts of Europe.

## Children get a kick out of greens with wacky veg

Glenda Cooper  
Consumer Affairs Correspondent

"Urrgh, it's sort of squishy," wailed Rosa, 9. "I don't like it". As she gingerly picked up a spoonful of chocolate-flavoured carrots, her classmates took up the chant: "Eat, eat, eat, eat."

To her right, Mohammed was shovelling down cheese-and-onion-flavoured cauliflower, declaring it as "good as my mum's", while Liam looked as if he would be sick.

With Britain's children turning their noses up at vital fruit and vegetables, health experts and retailers are joining forces to try to lure them back to loving greens.

Supermarkets such as Safeway have launched "kid-sized" fruit and vegetable packs and yesterday Iceland unveiled their "wacky veg" range, consisting of chocolate-flavoured carrots, pizza-flavoured sweetcorn, baked-bean-flavoured peas and cheese-and-onion-flavoured cauliflower.

They expect to sell £500,000 worth of the 99p packets in the next three weeks.

Of 300,000 people who develop cancer every year in the UK, around a third are diet related and potentially pre-

ventable. "There is a clear link between a diet high in vegetables and cancer prevention, yet recent research highlighted that mums are losing the battle to get their kids to eat vegetables," said Professor Gordon McVie, director general of the Cancer Research Campaign.

He said that attempts to persuade children to eat their greens through health education had all failed and a radical approach was needed.

"I think it is a serious attempt to do something helpful," he said, "I don't think it's frivolous."

A survey by Stratchclyde University earlier this year found that Christmas dinner was the only meal when most British children get an adequate intake of vegetables.

The researchers found that many mothers had given up forcing the issue of vegetable consumption because they disliked the stress.

At Gillespie Primary School, Year Four [eight- and nine-year-olds] named their least favourite vegetables as Brussels sprouts and peas, while their favourite, surprisingly, was broccoli.

Presented with the wacky veg they were intrigued but not always won over. Liam, pre-

ferred to the "self-declared enemy of all things squishy", tries some chocolate-flavoured carrots (below)

aged nine, who said he didn't like any vegetables, managed a small mouthful before declaring them all "disgusting".

"I don't like the peas. They're smelly. They're awful. The sweetcorn is alright but I don't like the rest. I hate all vegetables," he said.

Rosa, next to him, was equally smug: "The carrots are slimy and they taste of toffee, not chocolate," she said. "I don't like squishy things."

But those who had only expressed a mild dislike of veg were won over: "They are nicer

than usual," said Shaahra. "They are sweeter."

Mohammed and Ben had rejected the cauliflower and peas and wanted second helpings. "I love cauliflower. I reckon I eat vegetables once or twice a week at home. For lunch I think I would have bread, crisps and chocolate," said Mohammed. "It looks horrible but it tastes nice," said Mandy, stirring the carrots in their brown sauce.

"Yum, they're nicer than normal carrots," added George. For parents who balk at

flavoured vegetables [he received bubblegum broccoli] as being unhygienic, the researchers say that raw ones "Yuk, it's horrible," said George, nine, pulling an unhygienic grimace as he tasted a carrot. "Ugh, can I put it in the bin, miss?" said Liam after one taste of a cherry tomato.

Leaving the classroom, the children were asked what kind of chocolate bars they liked.

Twix, Galaxy, Mars, Lion bars – the names came rushing out. And what kind of fruit? Apples, oranges, grapes – then the names dried up. "I don't like apples, I'd rather have sweets," said Mehmet, summing up the views of many.

## Is Selina Scott really worth £1m a year?

Paul McCann  
Media Correspondent

Sky Television seems to have finally asked the question that has vexed many people for a long time: why is Selina Scott paid so much?

The satellite television channel has confirmed it is pulling her late-night celebrity chat show, *The Selina Scott Show*, off air just six weeks after it launched. The programme will be back on air in July with a new format and will be given an earlier start time in an effort to kick-start the show's flagging ratings.

One tabloid newspaper reported that of her shows, broadcast on 17 March, had an audience of just 6,000 viewers.

out anyone being able to say exactly why.

In the mid-Eighties her pay took off when she moved to the United States to host an entertainment gossip show for CBS for a reported \$1m (£625,000), salary. Since then her every job change – from the *Clothes Show* on the BBC to increasingly obscure satellite channels – has been accompanied by reports that she was being paid salaries of £100,000 or £200,000.

A talk-show on satellite station NBC Superchannel lasted just a year until 1996, then a meeting with Sam Chisholm, Sky's hard-man chief executive, brought the latest chat show.

For all the money she is report-

ed to make, indeed perhaps because of it, Ms Scott has been dogged by suggestions that she is all looks and no substance. Her low-brow reputation was set in 1983 when live on television she famously asked Fay Weldon, the chair of the Booker Prize jury, if she had actually read all the books being judged. A moment the BBC *crudely included* in its *TV Hell* programme in 1992.

Her image was not helped by a fawning interview she conducted with the American property millionaire, Donald "Trump", which prompted him later to write a letter describing her as "ingratiating" and "insecure". Stung by a painful profile in 1992, Ms Scott tried to defend herself by writing an article for the *Times*

newspaper. She denied earning £300,000 a year from two shows, but rather blew her chance of public sympathy by comparing herself with "many other single working women", and pleading: "I have absolutely no job security... If I am not paid, I have no company pension and no company car."

In view of this week's news from Sky her 1992 article may also have created a hostage to fortune: "The only real test of talent in television, as in the theatre, is the ability to put bums on seats". Broadcasting organisations are not uniformly stupid. Cilla Black is ITV's highest paid star because she delivers a huge audience. Something which Ms Scott no longer seems to do.



Selina Scott: Show taken off air

### What chat show hosts earn

The richest chat show host in the world is also the most imitated. David Letterman cut himself a \$14m deal with CBS when he moved from the NBC network.

The best-paid presenter on British TV is Cilla Black, whose *Blind Date* is in its 13th year for ITV and is indispensable to their schedule. She is estimated to make £25m out of her present two-year contract.

ITV has also made millionaires of Richard Madeley and Judy Finnigan, who were reported to make £1.5m for the daytime show *This Morning* and the occasional evening interview.

On the BBC, until Michael Parkinson returns, the best-paid tend to be newcomers. Ruby Wax is reported to be on £200,000, while Frank Skinner gets £300,000 for his show.

Old stagers Terry Wogan and Esther Rantzen struggle by on a paltry £200,000 and £350,000 respectively.

"Buzz, I think we've blown our holiday budget for next year."

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# IRA brings London to a standstill

Randeep Ramesh  
Transport Correspondent

It was a day of disruption for millions of commuters in the capital. A meticulously worked out and cleanly executed terrorist plan to create confusion bought London's transport system to a virtual standstill yesterday.

Travellers found roads clogged, stations closed and aircraft grounded by bomb threats which targeted major transport hubs in the south-east of England.

The warnings, assumed to have been made by the IRA, were timed to cause maximum chaos in the morning rush hour. At one point the Royal Automobile Club described conditions on the roads as "some of the worst for many years, if ever".

At the height of the alert Paddington, King's Cross, St Pancras, Baker Street and Charing Cross mainline and tube stations were closed and the surrounding roads and buildings evacuated.

According to the RAC, London was a patchwork of areas either packed solid with stranded pedestrians and jammed traffic or cordoned off and eerily silent. Trafalgar Square was empty at one stage after police sealed it off.

On the M25 there was a 10-mile traffic jam and routes into the London from the west were gridlocked. The disruption was at its peak at 9am.

"You have 250,000 vehicles crossing the inner London corridor during the peak rush hour," Martin Mogridge, a transport consultant, said. "If you targeted, say, four key points particularly in the morning rush hour where drivers have no choice but to carry on into London - then it is relatively easy to bring the roads to a halt."

The first bomb threats - using recognised code words - were received by local shops and hospitals in the centre of London at 6.45am. The earliest targets were the capital's main rail termini.

At 6.49am King's Cross, London's lifeline to the north, was closed. Two minutes later, Charing Cross, serving south London and Kent, was also closed. At 6.53, Paddington was shut down. Surrounding streets were evacuated and buses on routes using central London streets were all diverted.

Air transport was the next to

be targeted. Luton, 30 miles north of the capital, was the first of the airports to receive a bomb threat at 6.52am. It was also the last to be back in action, reopening at 3pm with flights resuming more than an hour later. Two suspect packages were found during the search - a wooden box which was exploded by Army bomb disposal experts in a controlled situation, and a package which proved to be harmless.

St Pancras and Baker Street, vital commuter links, were closed at 7am. By then the terrorists had switched targets, focusing on sea-faring passengers. At 7.20am, Kent police received a bomb threat to Dover docks. The harbour area was closed for 40 minutes for a search to be carried out, but again nothing was found.

Gatwick in West Sussex, the country's second busiest airport, was closed at 7.40am. More than 4,000 passengers were stranded in aircraft until the emergency was over and British Airways passenger jets circling the skies above the city had to be diverted to airports as far afield as Southampton, Bournemouth and even to Royal Air Force bases in Kent.

It was more than six hours before both terminals at Gatwick reopened, and then it was with only a patchy schedule. British Airways did not restart flights from the airport until the early evening yesterday. There were also closures at Stansted, in Essex, and Heathrow - where a suspect package was blown up by police at 9am.

"You have 250,000 vehicles crossing the inner London corridor during the peak rush hour," Martin Mogridge, a transport consultant, said. "If you targeted, say, four key points particularly in the morning rush hour where drivers have no choice but to carry on into London - then it is relatively easy to bring the roads to a halt."

The tense atmosphere led to many false alarms. London Underground's Jubilee line was closed for more than 20 minutes, reopening just before 9am after a suspect package on a platform at St John's Wood in north-west London had been checked.

Rail stations outside London did not escape. A coded telephone warning covering the three mainline rail stations in Watford in Hertfordshire, was received at 7am. Watford Junction, a busy commuter stop, was closed at 8.40am. Police carried out a controlled explosion just north of the station, and it was reopened soon after 9am.

It was afternoon before the capital's rail network resumed, normal services with Paddington the last of the central mainline and Underground stations to reopen at just before noon.

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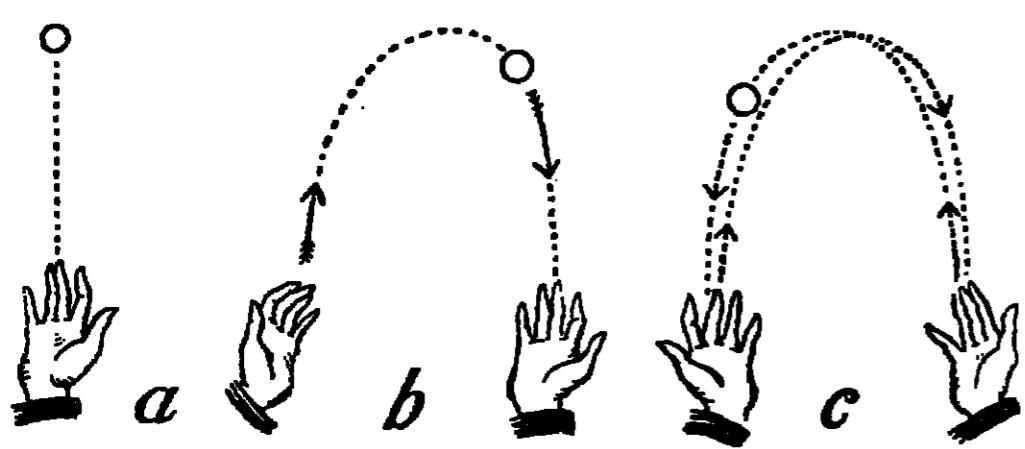


Fig. 6. The principles of Ball Juggling.

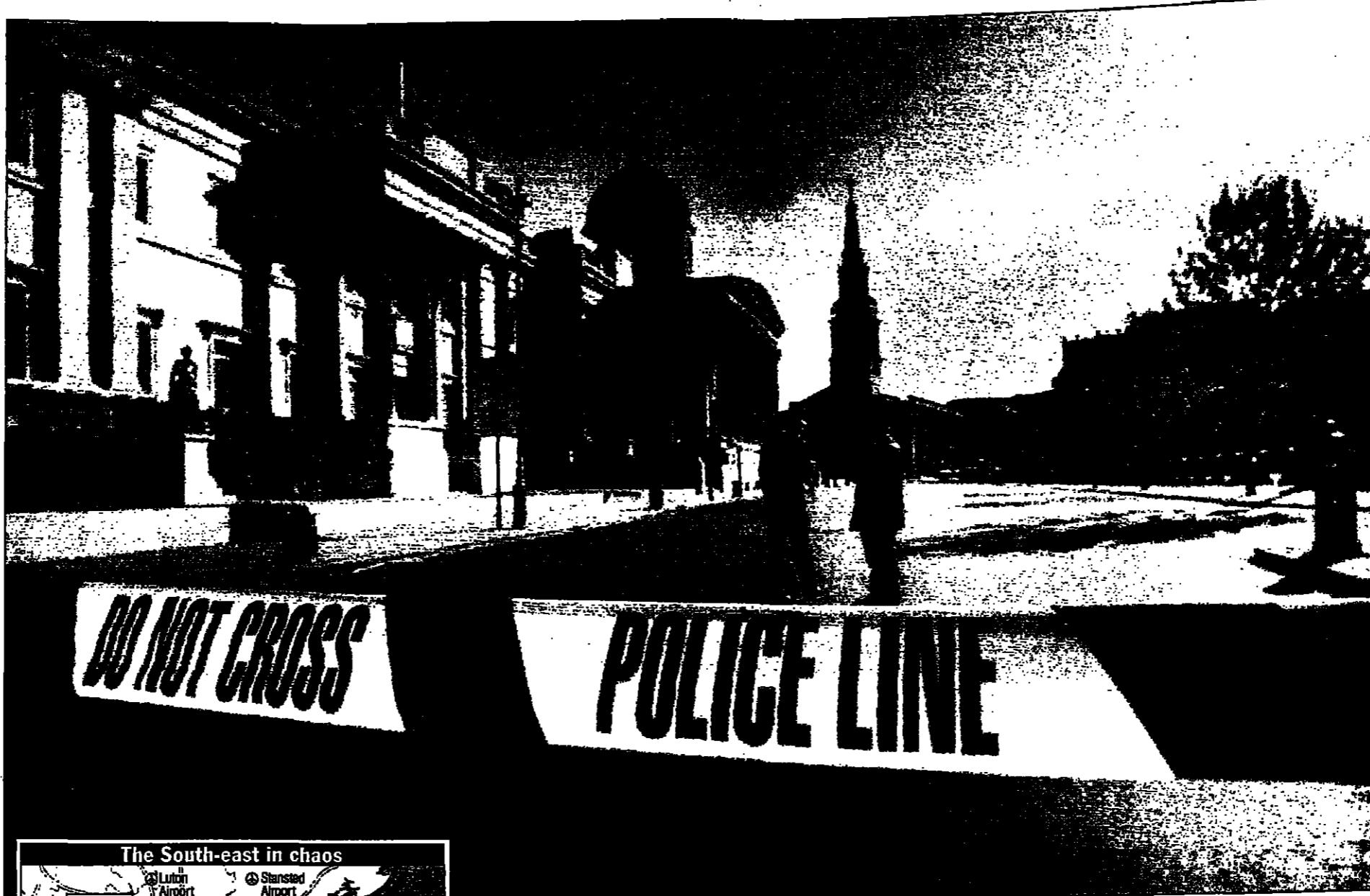
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Out of bounds: Trafalgar Square standing eerily quiet as London was put on alert yesterday

Photograph: Reuters

## Nation defenceless against terrorist disruption tactics

Jason Bernett  
and David McKittrick

The police and security services are "virtually defenceless" against the IRA's current tactic of using bomb threats to disrupt the transport network, terrorism experts believe.

At its most simple the strategy, which is intended to produce chaos and disruption with little risk of loss of life, can involve one terrorist telephoning a number of targets from anywhere in the world.

The IRA know that as long as the calls include a known codeword, the emergency authorities are certain to respond.

As Dr Michael Page, of Bradford University's Department of Peace Studies, explained: "It's very difficult to protect transport infrastructure. You cannot have every signal box and motorway

bridge manned or monitored. The system is virtually indefensible.

"We are a free, open, democratic country, so we don't have vast numbers of police that can be positioned everywhere - it's virtually impossible to deal with this."

However, the terrorist tactics do have weaknesses that can be exploited. To ensure their actions obtain maximum publicity and to maintain credibility, the terrorists need to plant some bombs, such as the device that went off in Leeds last Friday. It is while they are being placed or during recognition that they risk being identified.

The use of closed circuit television cameras and enhanced public awareness of suspicious behaviour are considered by the police as two of the most important anti-ter-

rorism tools available. But probably more important is the role of the intelligence services, particularly MI5 and Scotland Yard's Anti-Terrorist Branch. IRA members are unlikely to be caught in the act of making a bomb threat, but via careful surveillance and the use of informants, active service units can be tracked down.

Dr Page believes the IRA might want to change tactics and target different forms of transport such as bridges or tunnels.

He also speculated that it might want another "spectacular" hit similar to last year's Docklands bomb, although this is more likely to result in death, which would seriously damage Sinn Fein's hopes of entering talks with the new government.

He said: "The IRA likes to change its tactics and to be unpredictable."

David Veness, the Metropolitan Police's assistant commissioner with responsibility for specialist operations, emphasised that "the security assumption has got to be that there's a threat to human life". Evacuation was not automatic, he said, but employed only after sophisticated assessment of the threat.

Dr Richard Clutterbuck, lecturer in security at Exeter University, said people were ready to take a greater degree of responsibility for their own safety, adding: "I would like to see the police tell us the dangers and let us decide on whether we want to take the risk or not..."

Traffic disruption such as that caused by the IRA in England yesterday was once commonplace in the early 1990s in Belfast, but has not been seen on a large scale in recent years.

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# Parents launch fight to claim school places

**Lucy Ward**  
Education Correspondent

Parents of children denied places at popular local schools while other families cheat to gain offers are uniting in admissions blackspots to expose what they claim is the "myth of parental choice".

Amid evidence that in some authorities, hundreds of 10- and 11-year-olds have still not been allocated places for September, some parents are pledging to keep their children at home rather than accept offers from distant or low-performing schools.

The anger of new campaign groups being formed to fight for changes to admissions is directed at schools and local authorities but also at parents who use devious means to snatch places in over-subscribed schools.

*The Independent* revealed last week how councils and individual schools were being forced to clamp down to catch out families giving bogus addresses within key catchment areas or falsely claiming religious beliefs to gain admission to church schools.

Parents whose children have been squeezed out want new legislation to overturn the so-called Greenwich judgement which obliged local authorities to accept children from outside their boundaries into their schools.

## DAILY POEM

**Scream**  
By Rupert M Loydell

*I urge the bookshelf to surprise me, staring through familiar spines. Taking down friends I've not met for a while, I pass over names I've ignored before.*

*You mention strangers I should meet, as jets sting the sky overhead. Their song interrupts the words music, poems float by unseen...*

*The river is swallowing fields, mud settles or is torn from the bank. Above, the air screams in pain. In the swollen current everything is unclear.*

Today's selection from the Sacred Land Project anthology, *Earth Ascending* (Stride, £9.50), is by Stride Publications' editor. Sacred Land will be launched tomorrow in England with a ceremony at St Mary's Church, Willesden, north-west London.

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Sharon Allen waits at home with her daughter Danielle knowing that she could have cheated to win a place at their chosen secondary school, writes Lucy Ward.

Sharon and her husband Des, both property developers, own two houses just yards from St

Albans' Girls Grammar School, but missed out because they used their true home address - three miles away - to apply to Hertfordshire County Council. With just four months to a new school year, Danielle, 11, is among 44 children in the St Albans area still with no offer of a

secondary school place. Now the Allens, and fellow members of a local pressure group, Parents Charter 1997, are threatening to educate their children at home unless a suitable choice is forthcoming.

Photograph: Edward Sykes

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**COMPAQ**

# 'Oppression and deceit' that won police the Bridgewater murder confession

On first day of full appeal, QC tells how crime squad put pressure on suspect with a falsified statement

Patricia Wynn Davies  
Legal Affairs Correspondent

Police officers at the centre of the Carl Bridgewater murder investigation combined a carefully contrived device of deceit with oppression to extract the confession that led to the jailing of the four accused, the Court of Appeal was told yesterday.

Michael Mansfield QC, counsel for the late Patrick Molloy, said the attitude of the officers was such that when confronted with evidence of a falsified statement one, Detective Sergeant John Robbins, volunteered to "personally pull the handle on these men and open the trap-door and hang them, and he would do it with a bacon sandwich in his hand."

The accusations came at the start of the full appeal on behalf of the Bridgewater Four against their 1979 convictions for the murder of the 13-year-old newspaper boy at Yew Tree Farm, near Stourbridge, West Midlands.

James Robinson, 63, and cousins Michael Hickey, 35, and Vincent Hickey, 42, who were released on unconditional bail in February, were present in the packed courtroom at the Royal Courts of Justice in London. Mr Molloy died in 1981 while serving a 12-year sentence for manslaughter.

In an extraordinary twist in the 19-year campaign to get the convictions overturned, the Court of Appeal freed the Hickies and Mr Robinson after an independent forensic test, completed a fortnight earlier, revealed that the police had falsified a signed statement from Vincent Hickey purporting to implicate the others and shown it to Mr Molloy to provoke him into making a false confession.

Mr Mansfield told the three judges, Lord Justice Rook and Mr Justices Hidden and Mitchell, that it had been "carefully analysed" which officers must have been involved in



Comrades: James Robinson (left) getting support from Gerard Conlan, one of the Guildford Four whose convictions were overturned by the appeal court

that contrivance and in the oppression meted out to Mr Molloy, who was interviewed at least 30 times over 31 hours at Womborne police station, Staffordshire, in the run-up to his "confession." During the interrogation he denied involvement 80 times.

The QC said all the officers were members of the Regional Crime Squad Number Four and the members responsible for Mr Molloy were headed by Detective Inspector Geoffrey Turner. He deplored the since discredited Detective Constable

John Perkins, who died in 1992, and Detective Constable Graham Leake to interview Mr Molloy. The team also included DS Robbins, who was stationed outside the cell where the interviews took place, and Detective Sergeant Dennis Walker. Mr Mansfield said many other more senior officers in the Staffordshire police may have known what was going on in the small Womborne station, in particular, Detective Chief Inspector Wes Watson, who was there for much of the relevant time.

Mr Molloy consistently in-

sisted up to his death that police had shown him a statement under caution, which no longer exists, on which he read Vincent Hickey's name. It was the falsification of this statement which ultimately led Mr Molloy to make a confession - contained in the now infamous exhibit 54 - and led the Crown to announce two months ago that it would not contest the appeal.

Describing the build-up of "oppression" prior to the extraction of the confession, Mr Mansfield told the judges that crucial interviews were con-

ducted in the cells, not in the interview room. "We say this was no coincidence. It was intended to provide an atmosphere of isolation and claustrophobia."

The majority of the interviews conducted by the crime squad officers were not entered in the custody record. This was no minor omission or administrative mess, the QC said. "The officers based at this police station, possibly going up as far as DCI Watson were turning a completely blind eye to what the regional crime squad were doing."

The appeal continues.

Molloy", Mr Mansfield said, was to "plainly and bluntly disbelieve the denials and assert from the beginning that he (Mr Molloy) committed this murder that he was guilty ... and that nothing short of a confession, at least to presence at the farm, would do."

The most important ploy of all was to hint that others had "grassed him up". Interview records showed DC Perkins telling him: "Do you see what we are getting at, Pat? You are on the brink of no return, the no-options position."

The appeal continues.



Carl Bridgewater: Paperboy murdered at Yew Tree Farm

Photograph: Andrew Buurman

Ex-editor faces jail threat in Iraq arms case

Kathy Marks

A former editor of *The Independent* said yesterday that he had not known of an order by a judge restricting the use of confidential documents crucial to the quashing of the convictions of four businessmen in an arms-to-Iraq case.

Ian Hargreaves told the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Bingham, that he had believed the newspaper was acting within the law in reproducing fragments of two of the documents in a report on the men's appeal.

The Attorney-General is seeking to have the newspaper fined for contempt of court for publishing the excerpts. Mr Hargreaves, together with Chris Blackhurst, the senior reporter involved, faces a possible prison sentence. At the Court of Appeal hearing in November 1995, the convictions of the four men, who ran Ordtech an arms technology company, were overturned on the grounds that vital documents had been withheld from their defence by the Government.

The men were convicted in 1992 of exporting an assembly line for manufacturing fuses for long-range artillery shells to Iraq. Senior ministers signed Public Interest Immunity certificates to prevent the disclosure to the trial of the documents, which revealed that Paul Grecian, head of Ordtech, had been working with the security services.

Philip Havers QC, counsel for the Attorney-General, argued yesterday that Mr Hargreaves and Mr Blackhurst must have been aware that when the former Lord Chief Justice, Lord Taylor, ordered in July 1995 that the documents be made available to the defence, he had directed that they be used only "in connection with the proceedings".

*The Independent* argues that Lord Taylor at no stage made a formal order with sufficient clarity to bind the press.

Mr Blackhurst told the court that he too had been unaware of the July 1995 order, and said he had not read the newspaper cutting in which it was reported. The case continues today.

Twitchers plan to ruffle feathers with new militant image

Patricia Wynn Davies  
Legal Affairs Correspondent

Photo: Ian Hargreaves

Chris Blackhurst

Philip Havers QC

Lord Taylor

Paul Grecian

Lord Bingham

Lord Justice Rook

Lord Justice Hidden

Lord Justice Mitchell

James Robinson

Michael Hickey

Vincent Hickey

John Perkins

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Dennis Walker

Wes Watson

Carl Bridgewater

Yew Tree Farm

James Robinson

Michael Hickey

Vincent Hickey

John Perkins

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Dennis Walker

Wes Watson

Carl Bridgewater

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James Robinson

Michael Hickey

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Ex-editor faces jail threat in Iraq arms case  
By Marks

## Twitchers plan to ruffle feathers with new militant image

Paul McCann and Nicholas Schoon

The cozy binoculars and cagoules image of The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds is on its way out. Britain's sixth-largest charity wants to relaunch itself as a more militant and campaigning environmental organisation embracing younger supporters.

"People think of us as a slightly cuddly birdwatching club," said its public affairs officer, Paul Lewis. "But we want to be seen for what we are, a campaigning environmental organisation."

With 967,000 members and plans to sign up its millionth this year, the society is a larger and wealthier organisation than the UK arms of Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace. It has a country house headquarters in Bedfordshire, huge areas of

reserves and more than 900 staff around the country. The smaller green organisations might envy these assets, but they have one thing the RSPB is chasing - a younger supporter base of 25- to 40-year-olds.

"We're trying to give the RSPB a harder, younger edge," said Robert Tansey, strategic planner of the society's advertising agency Publicis, which yesterday unveiled a new, harder-edged poster campaign. "The current membership tends to be slightly right of centre, over 50 and rather blue stocking."

Even the society's celebrity members tend to be getting on a bit. Liam Gallagher was a member of the society's Young Ornithologist Club, but is not among the society's adult members. Damon Albarn of Blur is a birdwatcher too, but the society does not have him down as a member.

Barbara Young, the organisation's chief executive, emphasises that the RSPB's roots are in campaigning: "We were founded to take on the feather trade for women's hats in the last century." These days it campaigns on issues as diverse as reforming the EU's Common Agricultural Policy to make it more wildlife-friendly; overfishing in the North Sea; and stopping water companies and



Feathers ruffled: Bird lovers' traditional, rather cosy image (Photograph: Brian Harris) and right, the barbed wire bird's nest created for the latest advertising

farmers taking excessive quantities of water from rivers and aquifers. It has even commissioned a study on eco-taxation: how the cost of car tax discs should be varied according to how much pollution a car produces. But all these campaigns

have the ultimate common theme of conserving wildlife, including the birds.

Publicis has built a 10ft-wide

bird's nest made of barbed wire in Norwich for the launch of the campaign. It plans a nation-wide poster campaign based on this

striking image, which symbolises

humanity's threats to many of our native species. Even the sparrow's population has halved in two decades, probably on account of changes in farming practices.

"Our research has found that

people in their late twenties and thirties think a lot more about the environment because they are starting to have children," said Mr Tansey. "We're targeting them with the nest idea because it plugs into their own 'nesting instincts'."

The RSPB is also conducting a national direct-mailing recruitment campaign, to try to attract its one millionth member. The charity already receives £24m a year in donations, making it Britain's sixth-wealthiest charity.

A Fit Place to  
Rear  
Young?

Friends of the feathered

Members of the RSPB include: Michael Heseltine, Kenneth Clarke, Sir David Attenborough, the television game show host Bob Holness, Joanna Lumley, Nigella Lawson, Richard Briers, Bill Oddie, Vic Reeves, Julian Pettifer, Lisa Goddard and David Suchet.

## Haughey 'handed £1.3m to clear debts'

Alan Murdoch  
Dublin

Charles Haughey, the former Irish prime minister, was secretly paid £1.3m by the head of one of Ireland's leading supermarket chains to help meet huge personal debts, a judicial tribunal in Dublin was told yesterday.

The payments, made between 1987 and 1991 according to counsel for the tribunal Dennis McCullough, had been traced through accounts in Ulster, London, the Isle of Man, the Cayman Islands and Dublin.

Mr McCullough was summarising evidence to be heard by the tribunal following allegations of extensive payments to politicians by Ben Dunne. Until 1992, he effectively had sole control of his family's clothing and supermarket group with an annual turnover now close to £1bn.

The revelations led last November to the resignation of transport minister Michael Lowry who received payments estimated by Dunne at £355,000, partly for work for the stores. But the cash channelled through intermediaries to Mr Haughey, who retired as Taoiseach in January 1992 and from the Dail in November the same year, helps explain one of modern Ireland's great intrigues.

Taoiseach four times between 1979 and 1992, few could fathom how his ministerial salary could sustain his royal lifestyle, large mansion, estate, thoroughbred riding stables and private island with holiday home off the Kerry coast.

The tribunal was also told there would be evidence that besides the payments arranged by Mr Haughey's banker, Des Traynor, and Mr Dunne's company solicitor Noel Fox, three bank drafts with a combined value of £210,000 and made out in fictitious names were handed personally to Mr Haughey by Mr Dunne in 1991.

Mr Traynor, who died in 1994 was both an accountant

with Mr Haughey's firm, Haughey Boland, and subsequently head of Guinness Mahon bank in Dublin. The payments began after Mr Traynor, a close friend of Mr Haughey's had contacted Mr Fox, a key ally who had helped secure Mr Dunne's release after an IRA kidnapping in 1981.

Mr McCullough said Mr Fox was rung by Mr Traynor who said he had "a significant business problem", which he understood to mean that it related to Mr Haughey. Mr Traynor indicated he was attempting to assemble a group of benefactors who would each pay £150,000 towards easing Mr Haughey's debts, then put at £700,000.

Mr Dunne, when informed, suggested it would be better for Mr Haughey if he (Mr Dunne) put up the entire amount to prevent the matter becoming public. Asked by tribunal counsel Michael Collins about the idea of five or six people providing money, Mr Dunne quipped "Jesus Christ had 12 apostles and one of them crucified him."

The tribunal revelations emanate from disclosures of widespread payments to politicians made in legal documents by Mr Dunne during a 1992-93 family dispute that preceded the break-up of the Dunnes Stores controlling trust.

Mr Dunne's brothers and sisters bought out his share of the company for a reported sum of £15m after an embarrassing scandal in which Mr Dunne tried to jump from an Orlando hotel balcony after a drink and cocaine session with a call-girl.

After Mr Dunne left the firm, letters were sent to Mr Haughey by Dunnes' lawyers when - under new management - the company sought return of its money. Mr Haughey wrote in reply denying he received funds from either Dunnes or a related company and insisting he had not benefited from any improper payments.

The hearing is expected to continue for several weeks.

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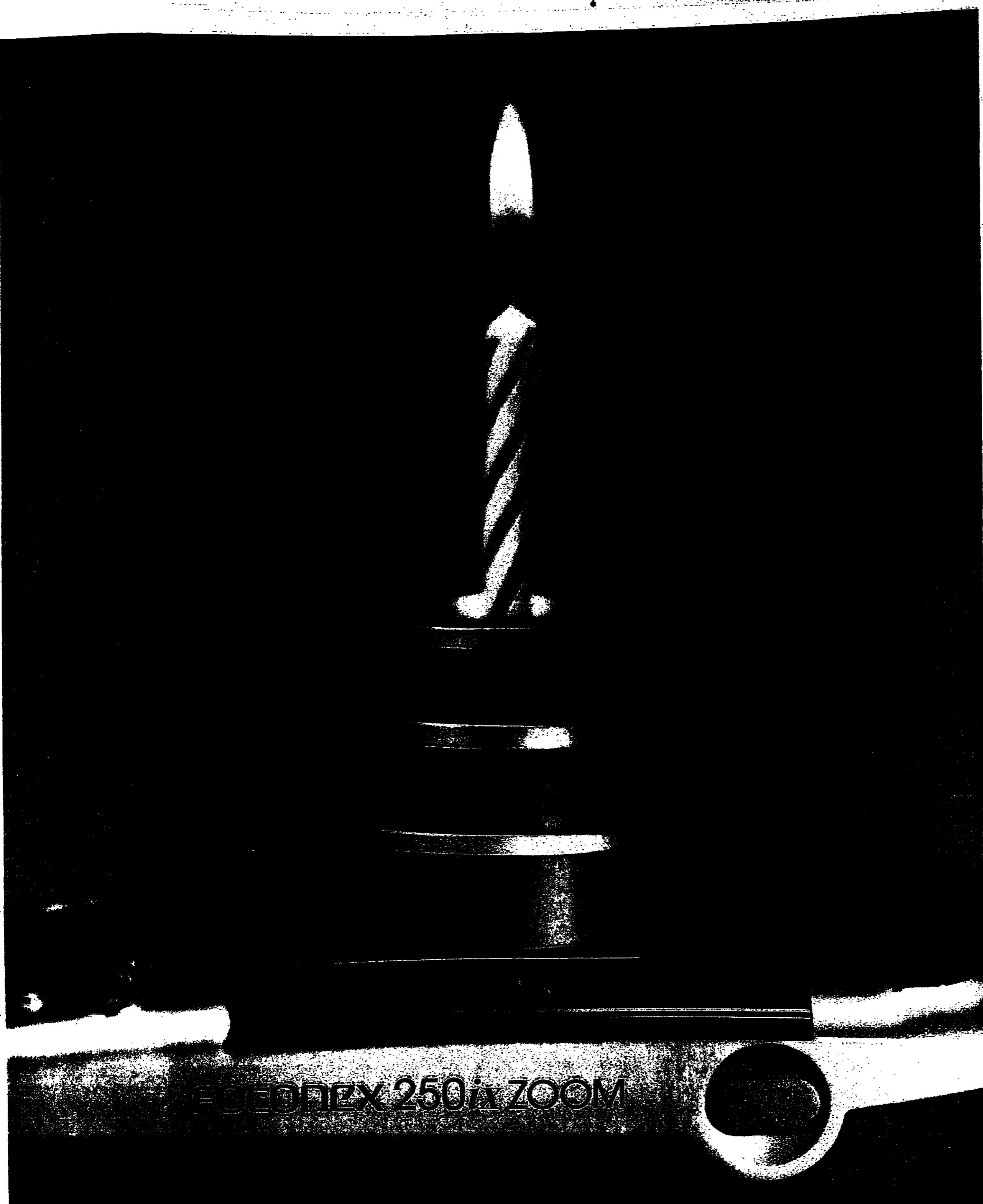
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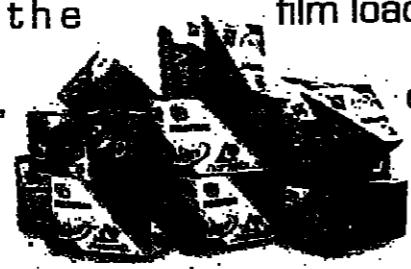
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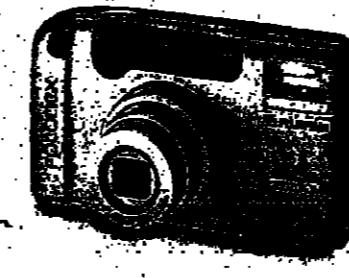


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*JOHN LEWIS*

They  
Major  
pledges to  
halt EU  
reform

# THE INDEPENDENT

# election '97

## They think that it's not all over ...

Colin Brown  
Steve Boggan and  
Anthony Bevins

John Major yesterday used *The Independent's* survey of Tory constituencies to repudiate the polls, while senior Labour sources accepted their lead was not as great as the pollsters had been saying.

Both party leaders are now placing Europe at the head of

their campaign agenda, claiming high poll ratings on the emotive subject, but it was *The Independent's* survey of constituents that concentrated minds on the uncertain state of the campaign.

Mr Major told sixth-form pupils at Leeds Grammar School that the opinion polls were nonsense. Challenged to say whether he believed generally that the Tories could

win the election after trailing so far behind Labour, Mr Major said: "Yep, I do."

He said: "The *Independent* interestingly enough actually chose to go out to the marginal seats, knock on a few doors and talk to people itself rather than just rely on opinion polls."

"Everyone will find out on May 1, but I can tell you I've fought quite a few elections now and what is happening on the

doorstep is not reflected in the opinion polls."

The polls are rubbish. Four days before the last election all the polls showed me behind by 7 to 10 per cent. I actually won by 7 per cent."

Senior Labour sources said last night that *The Independent* findings did not truly concern them, as their own polling suggested a lead of "more than 10 points, but less than 20".

"We err on the side of caution and we have never said that our lead was anything like the 20 or 25 per cent that some of the pollsters have been saying," he said.

Labour's own research suggests that support is holding up well in key marginals.

However, the research also shows that the party's commitment to hold a referendum on a single currency was not get-

ting through. "The trouble about Europe is that, until now, people have only followed it as a matter of 'Tory division,'" said one leadership aide.

"Our hope is that people will take more notice during the last week of the campaign and our message will get across."

"One area where we have been pleasantly surprised is in the support we appear to be getting from older people."

"But we feel we still have to do more work on getting young people to vote."

"At the moment, they switch on their television – especially the BBC – and they just see politicians slugging each other off and that promotes the feeling that all politicians are as bad as each other."

One Conservative campaign manager said earlier that Europe was providing the party

with its biggest lead among the voters, which explained why the Prime Minister was so willing to divert from a press conference on grammar schools to talk about Europe yesterday.

Mr Major told his main election press conference: "I think the honest heart of the Conservative Party beats in tune with the heart of the British nation."

## Major pledges to halt EU reform

Colin Brown  
Chief Political Correspondent

John Major last night clashed with Jacques Santer, the President of the European Commission and committed the Tories to putting a brake on moves to a federal Europe at the Amsterdam summit.

In strongly Eurosceptic tones, the Prime Minister couched his criticism of Mr Santer with a sustained and personal assault on the credibility of Tony Blair's claims to be trusted by the electorate.

Mr Major hurriedly re drafted a speech to a rally in York to highlight his rejection of Mr Santer's earlier remarks that institutional reform with more majority voting was a way of getting out of the trap of a vicious circle of paralysis.

"I disagree. Unlike the Labour leader, I will veto if it is right for Britain. I will keep my feet on the brakes. Mr Blair would go to Amsterdam and put his foot on the accelerator to a federal Europe."

Earlier, Mr Major told a BBC Radio phone-in programme that Mr Santer's remarks "absolutely reinforced the fears" Mr Major had raised a few days ago at a press conference on the Amsterdam summit.

"I do not believe there is an appetite for integration in Europe, with more of the decisions taken in Westminster to be taken in Brussels ... I don't want to integrate any further," said Mr Major.

Senior Conservatism privately said they were "not disengaged" from Mr Santer's remarks, despite being roundly scorned because they played into the Tory election strategy of raising Europe as a weapon with which to beat Labour.

Before the last minute changes, it was clear that Mr Major had intended to use his York speech for the most general assault so far on Tony Blair's leadership. He ridiculed Mr Blair on Europe but considerably widened his attack to Mr Blair's past record on CND, the sale of council houses, tax cuts, grant-maintained schools, pensions, wider share-ownership and tougher sentencing.

"If Mr Blair has been so wrong in the past, people can not trust him now to protect our interests in the future."

"He could have chosen Margaret Thatcher. He chose old Labour. Can there ever have been a more stunning misjudgment in the history of politics?"

Mr Major said that Mr Blair had accused him of making a fetish out of being isolated in Europe. "It is not isolation, Mr Blair. It is called British national interest. I would rather make a fetish out of protecting that, like you, surrendering," said Mr Major.

He added: "It is high time Mr Blair apologised to the British people for standing in the way of everything that has made Britain the better place it is today. It is time for Mr Blair to say sorry for getting it wrong time after time."

The Prime Minister's attack was echoed by Malcolm Rifkind, the Foreign Secretary, who said: "The Brussels vision of Europe seems disturbingly similar to that of the Labour Party; an end to the veto; a job-destroying employment chapter; and more powers to the EU Parliament – all part of the Commission's vision and all Labour Party policy."



Soapbox oratory: Tony Blair talking to crowds in Chester yesterday (Photograph: David Rose). Below: John Major with Leeds Grammar School pupils (Photograph: Tom Pliston)

## Santer scorns the prophets of doom'

Sarah Helm  
Brussels

Jacques Santer, the European Commission president, yesterday stepped into the British election campaign by launching a strong counter-attack against Eurosceptics who he scorns as "prophets of doom".

Eurosceptic voices were attempting to "demean" Europe's considerable successes, he said, and were intent on "scoring cheap points by caricaturing our legislation and our institutions", he said.

Mr Santer, speaking in the Netherlands, attempted to veil his attack by criticising Eurosceptics "everywhere" in the union, in the full knowledge that to intervene directly in the British debate would be viewed by all parties as unacceptable interference in national affairs.

However, Mr Santer, and other European leaders, have clearly been taken aback by the virulence of Britain's anti-European fever, and the timing of Mr Santer's broadside is not a coincidence. There are deep fears among Britain's partners that whichever party wins on 1 May, it will find itself shackled to an anti-European agenda for the foreseeable future.

Britain's partners are particularly afraid that if British anti-Europeanism is whipped up any further, far-reaching plans for EU reform, to be signed at Amsterdam in June, could be scuppered by a British veto.

"I'm convinced that the euro will be there from 1999 onwards. Economic and monetary union will not be delayed."

Mr Euro, page 14

EU to the east. Greater majority voting and integration must be agreed at Amsterdam if the EU is not to move into "gridlock".

"Those who criticise, do they know what they are talking about? Do they have an equally stimulating alternative? If so what is it?" asked the Commission president. The EU was not devised by "hostile" or "alien" forces but by member governments, he said.

Mr Santer targeted "demon merchants" who present monetary union as a threat to national sovereignty.

Tomorrow the European Commission will publish a report showing that the new euro-zone will be the biggest trading block in the world – bigger than both the dollar and the yen.

The report will highlight more clearly than ever the potential danger to British economic interests if the country stays out of monetary union. Britain is likely to find itself isolated on the world economic stage, the report suggests.

"Let me ask how much sovereignty will be left in a highly integrated world economy with fluctuating exchange rates?

"Rather than being confused by erratic speculation and uncertainty, citizens should be informed about the changes to come, about the advantages which the euro will hold for them, as consumers, savers, workers or tourists."

"I'm convinced that the euro will be there from 1999 onwards. Economic and monetary union will not be delayed."



John Major with Leeds Grammar School pupils (Photograph: Tom Pliston)

## THE HURRIED VOTER'S GUIDE

### THE CAMPAIGN

Education and Europe were the themes of the day, along with the leadership qualities of the Prime Minister.

The Tories' plans to create a grammar school in every town were the subject of their morning press conference, with the Prime Minister promising that parents would decide which schools could be selective.

Tony Blair, meanwhile, was making a speech in Manchester in which he criticised John Major's leadership, particularly over Europe, and claimed that the Conservatives were too divided to govern properly.

Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, helped to keep the issue of Tony Blair's news by defending the rights of Tony Blair's backbenchers to express their personal views on Europe and to take money for doing so, as more than 200 have done from businessman Paul Sykes.

For Labour, the deputy leader, John Prescott, was claiming that his party would need 10 years in office to complete its programme for change.

The Liberal Democrats focused on health at their morning press conference, saying the National Health Service was a lottery and warning that the Tories "could be" too slow in providing alternative care when it meant cancelling operations and lack of treatment.

Some Conservatives might look more favourably on government's recent deal-up-by-nationalised parties than the current one had done.

### KEY ARGUMENTS

Under pressure over Conservative splits on Europe, John Major hit back.

"We are conducting our dispute in an honest way. I may find that frustrating. But we aren't sweeping it under the carpet and hiding it in the Stalinist fashion as are the Labour Party, who have precisely the same divisions in their party."

"We are facing it honestly – painfully perhaps – but honestly," he said.

Tony Blair criticised Mr Major's leadership, or what the Labour leader said was the lack of it, along with what he called a "fetish of isolation" over Europe.

"A narrow, crabbled nationalism, the old force of the right, is reborn in the Conservative Party. It is a natural reaction to insecurity and fear in a changed world, but it leads nowhere," he said.

Paddy Ashdown turned his attention from health and the failings of the two other parties to the mayhem wreaked by the IRA in London and other parts of the country.

"The IRA tactics are clear: They are using the election for publicity, trying to cripple people's lives as they go about their normal business. This is economic terrorism, but it will prove futile," the Liberal Democrat leader said.

### GOOD DAY



Vincent Heugel is punter's 3-1

Heugel has come a long way from addressing the Tony party conference as a teenager in 1977.

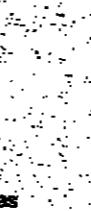
Though he may be the bookies' favourite at 35 he is unlikely to become leader this time around. He has only been in Parliament since 1989 but is still ranked as favourites alongside Michael Portillo and Michael Howard.

ONE TO REMEMBER

Gordon Brown promised more surprises from new Labour when he was quizzed at yesterday's press conference over the decision to use the colour purple as a background to their logos.

The shadow Chancellor said that Labour's new emphasis on purple reflected the party's "passion" for campaigning, adding: "Be prepared for a few surprises over the next few days."

### BAD DAY

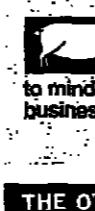


Jacques Santer was

nobody's friend yesterday

when he walked into the scrap with the Tory sceptics, to find neither Major nor Blair wanted him on their team. Unwanted "demon" merchant, he said. John Major said his speech was evidence of federalist ambitions, whilst Labour sniffed: "He was John Major's personal choice for President of the Commission and it is for them to resolve the fact that they now appear to have fallen out."

### HOGWASH



Prominent Tory Eurosceptic John Redwood

attacked Jacques Santer,

President of the European Commission, saying: "I wouldn't presume to advise John Major, and I myself would not presume to advise Mr Santer's business now, given that we are members of the EC."

to mind his own business because our business in some respects is Mr Santer's business now, given that we are members of the EC."

THE OTHER PARTIES



Alex Salmond,

leader of the Scottish

Nationalists,

said his party had

never been stronger

and was

set to

break

the 30 per cent barrier in the

polls.

Launching a new party document

"The Scotland We Seek", Mr Salmond said

"Independence is the only means to secure

a better future for Scotland".

Following another day of transport

chaos, senior Sinn Fein officials said the

disruption underlined the need for all

parties to begin peace talks. Senior

spokesman Mitchel McLaughlin said

"Violence from all sources is continuing

and the only way to change that is for

politicians to meet their responsibilities".

MEDIA STAR



Last night's Labour election broadcast

described life under

the Tories if they were elected for another five-year term. With

"Land and Hope and Glory" throughout, the broadcast

interspersed shots of cheering, flag-waving Conservatives –

including shots of senior Cabinet members filmed at varying

speeds – at a party conference, with images of empty

hospital wards, shoppers putting food back on to

supermarket shelves because they could not afford it and an

image of the Union Flag dropping to half mast. All in all, very

subtle.

# Problem of image for the ideal Labour candidate

Jojo Moyes

Barbara Follett should be an ideal Labour candidate. She is credited with transforming the party's image, made a laudable attempt in Emily's List to get more women into Parliament, and has an exemplary history in voluntary work.

Yet, since the 54-year-old wife of millionaire author Ken Follett first entered the British political fray, she has been dismissed as a "Labour luvvie" and "champagne socialist", derided for Emily's List, and branded Labour's lipstick colour coding candidate. In short, she has an image problem.

Ms Follett is resigned to bad press. Her years in South Africa, where her first husband was assassinated, have left her with substantial body armour. "One of the things that turns women off politics is what they call public scrutiny, which, when when you get down to it, is public misrepresentation," she says. "It doesn't bother me, because you get to feel that there's a truth and even if you're being misrepresented it shouldn't touch you."

What irritates her more is the champagne socialist tag, which invariably accompanies her and her fourth husband [who has postponed his bestsellers to write her press releases]. "I never even drink champagne. I can't drink - it makes me ill," she says. "I'm more a cappuccino socialist."

As for Follett-as-image-guru: "It was a tiny part of my life ... I did it because it was probably necessary and it's much more about what Mother said before you went out - have you got a clean-hanky type stuff ... I gave it up after four years, because it was actually so boring." After two previous attempts to get a seat, she spent the past two years campaigning for Stevenage, Labour's 37th target seat.

When the Folletts bought a cottage in her prospective constituency, she faced accusations that it was simply a springboard to a parliamentary career. She admits: "It's not the most obvious place for me to be. People see me as a rich bitch in a poor town ... they've got this ridiculous image." But she says she and Stevenage have much in common, not least because it is populated by those who understand what it is to be an outsider. "I'm not doing this for me, but for my children, grandchildren and because at heart I'm a reformer," she says. "Having



Barbara Follett: Dubbed a champagne socialist, even though she does not drink

money - or having Ken's money - doesn't define me, it just gives me more time. I'm lucky."

A swing of only 2.66 per cent will return Stevenage to Labour for the first time since Shirley Williams was defeated in 1979. "We've done about 88 per cent of the (66,000) constituency and we're now re-canvassing. We'd done 20,000 by last night." Her daughters say she approaches politics like she approaches clearing out their rooms. She starts at 6am, reels off voters' concerns in statisti-

cal order of priority - "jobs, education, housing, health ...", jokes about her "inefficient" doorstepping and plans her schedules on daily and weekly grids.

"This is a place that has suffered dreadfully under the Tories in the last 18 years. It has suffered job losses equivalent to five pit closures," she says. "People here believed that they would have houses for their children, and jobs, and they feel very betrayed." She wears a union badge given to her by one

of the new town's original builders - "some of the best men I've ever met".

Locally, at least, Ms Follett's approach appears to be paying off. In last week's poll she was 27 per cent ahead. Now even the traditionally Conservative Old Town turns up supporters. Karen Leverington, a mother of two, decided Ms Follett "had her finger on the pulse" when she saw her petitioning for their rail services. Stevenage, she said, wanted someone who really "stuck up" for the town. "and she would."

This is where Ms Follett's blanket canvassing makes sense: those who have met her generally support her; those who haven't still derive her. Either way, no one can say she hasn't tried. One is left with the feeling that her campaign team, by guarding her, are actually doing her a disservice - something reiterated by Mrs Leverington. "You know, if more people only spoke to her then they'd know what she's really like."

Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

# New EC ban on beef products is blow for Major

Sarah Helm  
Brussels  
and Fran Abrams

The European Commission is to tighten the blockade against British beef by reimposing a ban on gelatine.

The move, expected to be tabled at a Commission meeting tomorrow, will embarrass John Major, who halted the lifting of the ban almost a year ago as a "victory".

To date, the only success for the Government in its efforts to lift the ban has been the reimposition of the gelatine ban.

However, several member states, led by Germany, were opposed to any easing of the ban. Emma Bonino, the Consumer Affairs Commissioner, now firmly believes there is cause to fear that gelatine could be contaminated with bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE).

Franz Fischler, the Agriculture Commissioner, is expected to support the move when he

presents a new paper on further measures to combat BSE in the European Union.

The worldwide ban on British beef and beef products was imposed in March last year, provoking Mr Major's fury.

The Prime Minister rejected his partners' claims that the widespread presence of BSE in British beef meant a ban was necessary to protect public health, proposing instead to lift the ban with a policy of "non-co-operation".

However, far from securing a lifting of the ban, the ploy angered other European leaders, souring relations on several fronts and undermining Britain's position in the crucial talks on European reform, which will rewrite the Maastricht Treaty.

At key stages of the campaign, Britain found the Commission to be an ally. At first it supported the lifting of the gelatine and semen ban, based on the evidence then available.

Now Brussels is taking a tougher line. Officials are disappointed by the Government's failure to take adequate measures to eradicate BSE in cattle and to ensure that products such as gelatine are protected.

Action has already been tak-

en to prevent British gelatine exporters using infected British beef, and Commission officials say consumers on the Continent can rest assured that no infected British gelatine is circulating.

However, the Commission is expected to propose that only a political decision to reimpose the blanket ban will be totally failsafe.

The beef ban has cost every household in Britain £160 - the equivalent of two pence on income tax - Labour claimed yesterday. In an attack on the Government's handling of the crisis, the party said it had cost at least £520m in exports. Consumption of beef at home had dropped by 363,000 tonnes between 1995 and 1996 and 23,500 jobs had been threatened.

Labour's food, agriculture and rural affairs spokesman, Gavin Strang, said he had still not had answers on where cattle with BSE had been buried in the early years of the crisis.

The Government had decided not to send the agriculture minister, Douglas Hogg, to a Council of Agriculture Ministers meeting in Brussels yesterday. Instead, it had sent Lord Lindsay, a Scottish junior agriculture minister.

## MEDIA WATCH

### Ministers loom large in Labour's fright night

Paul McCann  
Media Correspondent

The broadcast then went on to press a series of negative 'hot buttons' that would have made the Republican election guru Lee Atwater proud.

First we saw grainy images of hospitals beds in corridors as on-screen text told of 50,000 fewer nurses. As "Land of Hope and Glory" continued to build, the camera cut to worried looking old people; the on-screen message said old people's homes would be sold by the Tories, but the implication was very much that they really would sell your granny. It cut back to grinning ministers just to underline the point.

Surveillance camera footage of drug dealing and bag snatching were used to make the Tories' record on crime scary.

And children were used to contrast with the horrid, gloating Tories. Sweet-faced schoolchildren looked worried about

their chance of getting into a decent school. Then we had an image that made Fitz the bulldog look like subtlety: a little girl offering her mum a tin of beans only to have her mum put them back because the Tories have put VAT on food.

"No one could be safe and nothing could stop them," said the screen and we were shown a thief with face disguised smashing a car window with a hammer. Perhaps he was meant to be another cabinet minister.

By now, "Land of Hope and Glory" had built to such a fever pitch any confusion in the mind of viewers about its intended irony had probably been overtaken by an urge to hide behind the sofa. All it needed was Ann Widdecombe in a SS uniform, but unfortunately it went out with a whimper: a sand castle carrying the Union Jack was toppled by a wave.



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# Tories fear poll defeat will ignite vicious power battle

Anthony Bevins  
Political Editor

Senior Conservatives are concerned that the party could become embroiled in an ugly and damaging battle for the party leadership if John Major goes down to defeat in next week's election.

While a number of Cabinet ministers are already positioning themselves for leadership battle after the election, some party grandees are considering how best to avert the anarchy that would follow if Mr Major decided to stand down in the immediate aftermath of a Labour win.

Some of the Prime Minister's friends would advise him to do just that - leave his own party in the lurch, let them fight it out, and, possibly, destroy the party's chances of returning to

office for another decade. Others are putting the future of the party before their loyalty to Mr Major, and are considering an appeal to urge him to stay on for as long as possible in a move to give the party time to settle down and make a mature judgement about its long-term future.

A number of senior Conservatives would prefer Mr Major to stay on as leader until the autumn. This would give the new intake of inexperienced MPs time to measure the quality of the contenders for the succession and to reflect on the mistakes that had been made during the campaign.

Some Tory moderates suspect that John Redwood's supporters would prefer an early contest, in order to 'bounce' him into the succession.

But the very idea that he might be helping Mr Redwood

could be enough to keep Mr Major from a precipitate resignation.

Yesterday's London *Evening Standard* reported that a 'Save John Major' group of ministers, including Gillian Shephard, the Secretary of State for Education, and two Northern Ireland Office Ministers, Sir Patrick Mayhew and Michael Ancram, were considering an appeal to get Mr Major to steer the party to calmer waters.

Naturally, Tory officials were quick to dismiss that notion because it smacked of defeatism at a time when party managers were arguing that the party was making something of a mid-campaign comeback.

There were suggestions at the weekend that attempts were also being made to prevent a right-wing 'coup' on the executive of the backbench 1922

Committee. The chairman of the 1922 committee executive is likely to be enough to keep Mr Major from a precipitate resignation.

Speculation has been so rife about plots that Mr Redwood spoke out at the weekend, denying he was already preparing for a swift post-election strike.

While no minister would be foolish enough to set up a formal campaign and risk getting caught red-handed - close confidants of the leading contenders are making discreet preparations for all the eventualities.

The one thing that some contenders do not seem prepared for is a Conservative victory, with Mr Major staying on for another five years as prime minister.

One of his friends told *The Independent* this week that if that happened, a lot of conspirators could expect to get their come-uppance and be out of the Government without much ceremony.

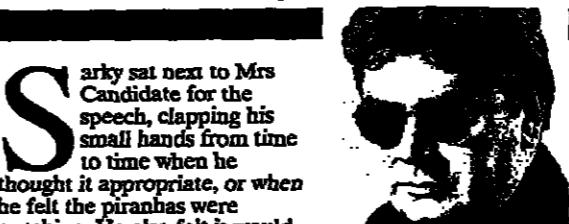
There is undoubtedly a lot of anger in the Major camp about the disloyalty that has been shown during the campaign and by the trouble that has been caused by senior figures such as Kenneth Clarke and Michael Howard, who have this week been in open conflict.

Mr Major has repeatedly refused to confirm that any of his ministers will retain their Cabinet seats after the election.

If he is elected, a general purge is possible, under cover of giving younger people a chance of high office and preparing a new generation for party leadership in the millennium.



by Aanonymus



notion of leadership. His disdain for the Grey Man's weakness was real enough. Sarks had sat next to him during Commons Question Time and had felt his neighbour's body go rigid with contempt. "I don't hate him," the candidate had once said. "I just can't stand watching him squirm. He was given this high office - this immense responsibility - and he fritters it away. Frankly - and I know it's uncharitable to say it - he disgusts me." Even the hilarious campaign adventures of the Bohemian novelist were taken by the candidate's team as being indicative of a lack of 'Tory moral fibre'. There was no 'self-control'.

Sarks was not so sure. Was not the Grey Man's true problem that he led a party genuinely divided in two about its own future? Could it really be the case that this historic fissure was purely the product of personal weakness, of one man's wimpishness? He thought not.

This concentration on leadership led him back to the key unanswered question. Was the candidate a saviour or a monster? Did he honestly believe (as this speech suggested) that he had single-handedly saved the party with the assistance of Friend Bobby and the support of his children? "I said I would transform the party, and I have." What about those years when the Welshman had toiled away, facing down the Trots, squaring the barons and losing elections? "Every objective I set in creating a new party, I have achieved."

What, alone? A biblical prophet come to

Key lines punctuating the speech hit him at regular intervals like slaps across the back of the head.

Key lines punctuating the speech hit him at regular intervals, like slaps across the back of the head. "We believe in strong defence ... our armed forces are the most admired in Europe ... defence will be built on our national nuclear deterrent ... we strongly support Nato enlargement." And "I am a British patriot, I put my country first."

Sarks Man needed reassurance, and he was getting it. But, thought Sarks, there was surely a difference between telling readers of the *Daily Mail* that the country was safe in your hands, and this almost bravura donning of the gaudy amour of the defunct Iron Lady. There was something vaguely masochistic, disturbingly sexual, about this conversion. The candidate was getting pleasure out of it; pleasure that was eluding Sarks. Masochism, even his worst enemies agreed, was not one of his faults.

This odd tone might have something to do, Sarks mused, with the candidate's

judgement? Was this simply a piece of necessary election hyperbole, designed to contrast the unknown record of the candidate with the all-too-familiar one of the Grey Man - or did he and the retinue actually believe it all?

Sarks was no saint. He desired power as much as anyone else, and thought that he deserved to exercise a nice big chunk of it. He was not Ego's enemy. But he did not imagine that serving in the Iron Lady's cabinet had been much fun; and even now he had no idea what to expect. Was the boss committed to open government, consultation, co-operation and radical policies? Would he quickly dispatch Friend Bobby to a ministerial nunnery? Or was he a charming and dangerous megalomaniac, who would reward his courtiers?

Sarks turned to Mrs Candidate and smiled. "Interesting speech," he said.

## Union leader suggests Labour tried to gag him

Stephen Goodwin

The leader of one of Britain's biggest trade unions disclosed yesterday that he had come under pressure not to attend this week's Scottish TUC conference.

John Edmonds, general secretary of the GMB General union, did not name the source of the pressure but his clear implication was that it came from the circle around Tony Blair.

The Labour leadership has tried to distance itself from the centenary gathering of Scottish trade unionists in Glasgow, fearing that hardline demands on nationalisation and workers' rights would frighten the

More embarrassing for the Labour leadership than the views of a trade union leader described in the past as "a dinosaur" was Mr Edmonds' suggestion of an attempt to gag him.

"Some of us have not been doing much public speaking during the last few weeks. It was suggested to me that I might plead some other engagements rather than come to Glasgow," he said. When questioned later, Mr Edmonds did not deny that the suggestion came from the Labour leadership, or from its advisers.

There was some comfort for Labour when a call by the public service union Unison (Scotland) for a national minimum wage of 50 per cent of median male earnings was manoeuvred off the agenda.

The formula would have set a minimum of £4.42 an hour, well above any figure that Mr Blair could approve.

Rodney Bickerstaffe, Unison's general secretary, said he was "disappointed" that the demand had been dropped from the agenda but it did not change the union's position, which would put its case to Labour's proposed Low Pay Commission.

The conference also slightly moderated a demand for the nationalisation of the railways. And it overwhelmingly rejected a call for the repeal of all Conservative anti-trade union legislation. A motion from the RMT rail union had called for the "complete renationalisation of the whole railway industry" within the first term of a Labour government. However, after lengthy backroom wrangling, the wording put to the conference simply called on a Labour government to "establish a clear timetable for the return of railway companies to public ownership".

The wording would allow Labour to concentrate on strengthening the existing regulatory framework without immediately committing vast sums of money to renationalisation. Existing passenger franchises could be allowed to run for their full contractual term.

electorate and hand the Conservatives a propaganda gift.

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"The aspirations of the British people cannot be met through the narrow economic limits set by the Tory chancellor," he said. While Mr Edmonds welcomed the use of a windfall tax to invest in job creation, he went on: "I suspect pretty soon that a Labour government will also have to intervene directly to stimulate investment and require industries to train their staff."

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Mr Edmonds' performance was just the sort

# Tories plan parental choice over grammars

Fran Abrams and Judith Judd

Parents would decide whether they wanted a grammar school in their town, ministers said yesterday—but only up to a point. The next Conservative education secretary would decide whether or not local demand for selection was strong enough to justify it.

Announcing details of how the Prime Minister's plans for a grammar school in every town would work the current secretary of state, Gillian Shephard, made it clear that schools would have to make a case to her in order to go selective.

The Prime Minister said yesterday that the process by which a com-

prehensive could become a grammar would be similar to the process for opting out—that there would be a parental ballot. However, aides made it clear later that it would be up to the school's governors whether they wanted to hold a ballot or not.

They could also decide whether or not to consult parents in feeder primary schools about whether or not they wanted their local secondary school to be a grammar.

Mrs Shephard would not speculate on what would happen if all the schools in an area applied to be selective, as comprehensives in Brom-

ley have done, but an official said later that she would be likely to choose two or three rather than allowing all to go ahead.

Yesterday's announcement also included plans to give local authority comprehensives more control over their budgets, with councils being forced to hand over all the money apart from that needed to carry out statutory obligations such as planning and running welfare services. Under the reform, schools could own their own buildings and be the official employers of their own staff.

Announcing the moves, the Prime

Minister said they would give state schools an independence and freedom they had 'never had before. There would be no return to the eleven plus, he said, but there would be an increase in diversity.'

'Doctrinaire Labour councils won't be able to stand in the way. We just want more good schools that are all aiming to offer the best, and we want more choice in education for parents and more variety for pupils,' he said.

'They would deny most parents the opportunity of good schools. Instead a small group of parents could decide to deny other children the same choice and opportunities which

were in favour of retaining grammar schools. By 1987 a MORI poll showed 62 per cent in favour and a Harris poll last year showed 54 per cent backed a return to full selection.

Margaret Dewar, chairman of the Grammar Schools Association said: 'I would like to see funding go to academic schools as well. I do think that they need some financial incentive.'

Peter Miller, president of the Secondary Heads Association, asked how selecting the top 20 or 30 per cent would help under-achievement. 'The turmoil over admissions will be made worse by any increase in selective schools. The Conservatives have abrogated their responsibility to plan the system.'

## Party leaders quizzed on race issue

Anthony Bevins  
Political Editor

Paddy Ashdown has warned that French-style National Front racism could occur in Britain unless politicians provide a lead in opposing it.

The Liberal Democrat leader says in an election interview with ZEE TV, a satellite and cable channel that specialises in Asian affairs: 'There are those in the Conservative Party, including some rather high-profile figures, who have talked about playing the race and asylum card.'

'It may deliver them votes but it could unleash the most ugly consequences. There is a role for politicians to lead and set examples.'

'If they duck out on this issue then they will find the issue devours them, instead of them being able to be the instrument that stops it.'

But in a separate interview to be broadcast later this week, John Major goes out of his way to defend Nicholas Budgen, successor to Enoch Powell in Wolverhampton South-West, who has taken a leading role in opposing any further relaxation of immigration law.

Mr Major said that Mr Budgen's views had been misunderstood. 'Like me he sees a place in the Conservative Party for people of different

ethnic backgrounds,' the Prime Minister said.

Told that the Tories were not seen as 'Asian friendly', Mr Major said: 'I am sorry if some Asians feel that, because it certainly isn't true. The Conservative Party is open to everyone whether they are Asian, British, Chinese or Caribbean. If they think like a Conservative and share the Conservative philosophy they will be welcome in the party. Asians make a huge contribution to the UK and I would like to see more Asian MPs.'

He said: 'The Asian culture and other cultures have sunk deep into the British way of life ... The old shibboleths and fears that people raised have gone and people now work, cheek by jowl, with Asian neighbours.'

But a survey to be published in London's *Time Out* magazine tomorrow suggests that hardly any black Londoners believe Mr Major is sincerely concerned about the issues affecting them.

The survey found that only 2.5 per cent of those who responded thought he was concerned, and one-quarter of the 18- to 35-year-olds believed that he may even be a racist. More than half of those in the *Time Out* survey were not registered to vote and of those who were, one in five said that they would not be voting on 1 May.

## Ashdown's martial art fails to dent Coe's hunk appeal

Barrie Clement

The soldierly Paddy Ashdown has set female hearts aflutter during the hustings – well at least those of a certain age.

Yesterday he failed to impress eight-year-old Lucy McMahon of Stithians Primary School, near Truro, Cornwall. Invited to contribute her political opinions to a class poster, 'GOVERNMENT – WHAT WE THINK', Ms McMahon ventured: 'You should only vote for rich or hunky men.'

Asked whether Mr Ashdown fitted the bill, she smiled, declined to reply, but said Sebastian Coe did. The former athlete lives in the village and is the sitting Tory MP for the constituency.

Perhaps the most controversial comment, however, came from the whole of class three. 'We think there should be more people like Rolf Harris,' they said. One young classmate, called Morwenha, wrote: 'I don't think children know what they are talking about, so should not vote.' So, people who are 18 years old and over do?

An emerging right-winger called Kirsten demanded that 'people should stay in prison longer'. She showed a degree of political eclecticism, however, by siding with the anti-hunt lobby: 'People who kill animals for fun should be put in prison for a year.'



Valiant fight: Tory Margrit Williams canvassing in Tredegar against Labour's Llewellyn Smith, who won a 30,000 majority in 1992

Photograph: Rob Stratton

## Essex woman travels from Kowloon to the Valleys in search of votes

Candidate chases elusive support in Blaenau Gwent against a Labour majority of more than 30,000, reports Tony Heath

Later, Mr Ashdown showed admirable restraint when a ferret appeared behind him on a wall as he was interviewed on television. He said the creature was the most patient and docile he had set eyes on.

Elsewhere in Cornwall, the campaign to elicit support from the younger generation got dirtier by the minute.

The Conservatives even offered children a ban on homework. In another outrageous play, they promised that a reformed child benefits system under a Conservative government would cut out the middle man, namely parents.

The 'mock election' at Saltash Community School is not for the politically squeamish.

One Tory poster, put up in a school corridor, was craftily coloured Liberal Democrat yellow and proclaimed: 'The Liberal philosophy – you worked for it, now we will take it; a vote for the Liberal Democrats is a vote for higher taxes; the Liberals would rob you of your earnings – why not rob them of your support?'

Conservative supporters, who mysteriously failed to appear during Mr Ashdown's visit to the school, whether through boycott or dictat of the head teacher, had so far refused to take the posters down.

Perhaps the school philosophy at Stithians Primary should be taken on board by politicians of all hues: 'Be honest, own up and don't tell lies.'

A cold wind knifing down the South Wales valley seemed to spur Margrit Williams, the Tory candidate with the highest mountain in Britain to climb, to greater efforts.

She was out seeking elusive supporters in Tredegar, the heart of the Blaenau Gwent constituency, which in 1992 returned Labour's Llewellyn Smith with a majority of more than 30,000. 'I hope you can support me on 1 May,' shoppers were told hopefully as they headed down Commercial Street.

Commercial Street was, in name at least, an appropriate locale for Ms Williams to canvass. She was for some time an investment consultant based in Hong Kong. Born in 1964 at Southend-on-Sea in Essex, she lived in Germany for a while, and then served as a councillor in the Tory flagship borough of Wandsworth, south-west London, before embarking on a journey that seems fated to end up as an 'Essex Woman Routed by Valleys Man' story in the local paper, the *Gwent Gazette*.

Not every passer-by accepted the blue-bordered leaflets promising to expose allegations of waste in the local authority where there is a solitary Tory councillor among the 42.

The area is saturated with reminders of radicalism. The Tredegar Workmen's Medical Aid Society, a service built with the pennies of miners and steelworkers, was the inspiration for the National Health Service, set up by Aneurin Bevan, the local MP from 1929 to 1960. Four huge stone pillars on a hillside commemorate the man and his wife – three represent the towns of Tredegar, Ebbw Vale and Rhymney and the fourth and largest, Bevan himself.

Ms Williams passes it frequently but is unlikely to pay it much heed. Her undoubted energy and commitment qualifies her as one of Baroness Thatcher's dogged fighters.

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# Combative Netanyahu rides out the storm

Patrick Cockburn  
Jerusalem

Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, shows every sign of having ridden out the storm over his appointment of a chief prosecutor who would go easy on his friends and allies in their legal troubles. As Israel begins the Passover holiday none of his cabinet members or the parties

who belong to his coalition had resigned.

Mr Netanyahu countered on television as soon as attorney-general Elyakim Rubinstein announced on Sunday that the Prime Minister would not be indicted. The Israeli leader repeated his favourite tactic of claiming a famous victory and total justification of his actions, although what Mr Rubinstein said was rather differ-

ent. Mr Netanyahu said: "I didn't commit any crime and the attorney-general verified this."

In fact Mr Rubinstein said: "There were good grounds to suspect an illegitimate motive [in the appointment], but not enough evidence for a criminal indictment." He also said: "The actions of the Prime Minister raised suspicions."

In the wake of the report issued by the attorney-general

and Edna Arbel, the state attorney, ministers who had appeared to be on the edge of resignation began to announce that they would stick with the government. Even Dan Meridor, the Finance Minister, long a discontented member of the cabinet, is to remain at his post. He is to be a member of a new committee which is to vet senior appointments in future.

A poll after the attorney-general's report by the daily *Yediot Aharonot* found that 58 per cent of Israelis did not think Mr Netanyahu should resign, although 40 per cent said he should. The effect of the affair appears to have been to deepen the divide within Israeli society. However, 56 per cent believe that Tzachi Hanegbi, the Justice Minister, who was also not indicted, should resign while 38 per cent thought he should not.

The Prime Minister presented the attacks on him as purely motivated by political animosity. He said: "They cannot accept the fact that the people voted for us and not for them. They cannot accept the fact that we are building on Har Homa. They refuse to accept our vigorous objection to a Palestinian state. They refuse to be reconciled to the fact that we are guarding the Golan Heights."

Palestinians expressed concern yesterday that this rhetoric would lead Mr Netanyahu to be even more intransigent in negotiations with them.

Only one of those against whom the police had asked for indictments, Aryeh Deri, the leader of the religious Shas party, will be prosecuted, which is leading to allegations of discrimination by Israelis from North Africans, who are

the main supporters of Shas. Mr Netanyahu sounded combative as he claimed that the attorney-general had exonerated him, but the affair has been a further blow to his prestige. The new appointments commission may also make it difficult for him to put his own candidates in top jobs. Five petitions to the Supreme Court call for the attorney-general's decision to be reversed and Mr Netanyahu to be indicted.

## Sixty years on, Guernica still scarred by Hitler's first blitz

Elizabeth Nash  
Gernica

Iñaki de Arzani, still vigorous at 74, has a lively gaze and a ready smile. "It was a beautiful day, just like today," he recalls. "Monday – market day – and the town was packed, because people came to Guernica from the villages all around."

Guernica's 6,000-strong population was swollen to some 10,000 on 26 April 1937, not just with villagers coming to market but with Basque troops and refugees retreating from Franco's approaching nationalist forces. There was uncertainty and fear in the air.

"Our teacher sent us home from school at midday, because he was worried something might happen," Iñaki continues.

"Then as we were having lunch, at about 2pm, the church bells started to ring, which was how we sounded the alarm. I ran into the hills with some friends and about an hour later saw the first planes, circling a few times and dropping their bombs."

Heinkels and Junkers of Hitler's Condor Legion flew up the valley for more than three hours that afternoon, dropping bombs on Guernica's crowded market square and machine gunning its terrified citizens from the air.

The destruction prompted Picasso to produce his masterpiece *Guernica*, which many consider this century's finest painting.

"The pilots came in so low that I saw their faces, their goggles, everything. They opened fire and there was no answering fire; we had no anti-air defence. I heard explosions, saw balloons of smoke. I was scared stiff," Iñaki says.

It was Europe's first aerial bombardment of civilians, and a trial run for the subsequent destruction of Coventry, London, Warsaw and Dresden.

The targets were not strategic: Guernica's arms factories were spared and they still stand beside the railway line.

Pablo Izaquira, who was then a 10-year-old altar boy on bell-ringing duty, hid in the spiral staircase of the church spire.

"I later spent 50 years of my life working in those factories, making pistols – Condor pistols they were called," he smiles at this irony of fate. "He smiles at this irony of fate. His son has since been killed in the same way.

Between 500 and 1,000 people died that afternoon; no one knows the exact number.

"My sister was a nurse at the military hospital and said they couldn't tell how many died," Pablo said. "They loaded the

bodies into carts and dumped them in the cemetery. Many remained beneath the ruins."

Iñaki's eyes fill at the memory of what he saw when he scrambled down from the hills. "It was just rubble," he said. "Houses were burned by incendiary bombs and flames leapt from house to house. We were left in the street with nothing but the earth beneath us and the sky above our heads.

Three days later, Franco's troops came in."

Eduardo Vallejo, Mayor of Guernica, is convinced that his city was blitzed because of its importance to the Basques: "Guernica is almost sacred for

us, the cradle of our ancient rights and liberties. We have held democratic assemblies beneath our oak tree for hundreds of years."

He says Franco wanted to punish the Basques for not supporting his revolt against the republic the previous July. "But he was ashamed of what he had done," he said, "and accused the retreating Basques of torching their own city. He died without ever admitting the truth."

Iñaki adds a postscript. "One day in September 1937, I was playing in the rubble and a couple of buses came up carrying smart men in uniform – Germans. They were Condor pilots.

They asked us what we had seen that day and what had been where, and through an interpreter we told them. They seemed proud of their work. And I had to swallow this for 40 years for fear of imprisonment."

In recent years, local historians have tried to reconstruct events, assembling survivors' memories and scant documentary evidence. "We were concerned that our children were

being taught about the mountains of Australia and the rivers of England but nothing about our own history," says Alberto Ibarra, a teacher at Guernica's primary school.

"There were no books about Guernica, and the bombardment destroyed the town hall's local archives. We found a lot of material in Madrid in Franco's files on 'Destroyed Regions'. But we still don't know

whose idea the bombardment was – the Nazis or Franco's. Towards the end of Franco's dictatorship (in 1975), some Francoists said the act was imposed upon him by the Nazis. But there is no documentary evidence either way."

Guernica's ancient oak was spared, a gnarled stump protected in a little stone temple on a grassy knoll though it is a nearby eucalyptus that scents

the spring air.

Last year the German parliament offered DM3m (£1m) in order to build the town a sports centre, a good-will gesture that Mayor Vallejo appreciates, although he would have preferred a formal apology.

"They can't pay with money for destroying our people," he said. "But they could say sorry, and the 60th anniversary would be a good opportunity."



"Flames leapt from house to house and left us with nothing but earth beneath our feet". About 500-1,000 people were killed at Guernica

Photograph: Corbis-Bettmann/UPI

## US tussle over chemical weapons reaches climax

Mary Dejevsky  
Washington

One of the Clinton administration's most keenly fought political battles may finally be nearing its end with the opening tomorrow of a long-delayed Senate debate on chemical weapons.

The Bill to ratify the international convention on chemical weapons, which would outlaw the use, production, transfer and stockpiling of poison gas and other chemical weapons, was submitted for consideration more than four years ago. But it has had to surmount strong objections from arms control sceptics even to come to debate.

If the necessary two-thirds majority for ratification is achieved at the vote on Thursday, the United States will have just got in under the wire.

The treaty has already been ratified by more than 65 states and comes into force next week with or without the US.

If the vote goes against ratification, the US will find itself in the unlikely company of such countries as Iraq, Libya and Iran, which have refused to sign. This is an outcome deplored by President Bill Clinton, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, and defense secretary William Cohen, all of whom have spent weeks lobbying energetically for ratification.

But the outcome is by no means certain. Although the convention has support from Democrats and Republicans and was signed by a Republican president, George Bush, five years ago in Geneva, there is a hard core of Republicans, led by the chairman of the Senate's influential foreign affairs committee, Jesse Helms, that has been adamantly opposed.

They say the treaty would not ban the development or use of chemical weapons, because key countries are not signatories. They say compliance cannot be verified, and that US chemical manufacturers would be subject

to "unconstitutional" searches by international inspectors. Their principal objection, however, is the obligation on signatories to share information about how to protect themselves from chemical weapons. They say this would jeopardise US national security.

Interviewed on television at the weekend, Ms Albright defended ratification, saying: "People will wonder what is wrong with us" if the US fails to ratify a treaty that "has made in the USA written all over it".

"You can imagine," she asked, "what it would be like for us to be on the same side as Libya and Iraq?"

Supporters of the treaty argue that verification provisions are the tightest ever of any arms control treaty. They see the objections as deriving less from the chemical weapons convention as framed, than from what they see as a visceral scepticism of arms control itself in a section of the Republican party.

As recently as two weeks

ago, Mr Helms and his allies were holding out for several dozen amendments which would have effectively emasculated the treaty. Now, after a charm offensive by Ms Albright, which included a visit to Mr Helms's home state of North Carolina, and another to Houston, Texas, where she appeared on a platform with George Bush, Mr Helms has lifted some of his objections.

Mr Helms has also won a separate concession. Last week, Mr Clinton announced that two independent agencies – the arms control and disarmament agency and the US information agency (which has responsibility for the Voice of America radio station) – would be brought into the State Department. Mr Helms has urged such a reform to increase congressional control of their activities and reduce bureaucracy.

Despite the last-minute horse-trading, there remain on the table five amendments. Each could scupper the treaty.

Warplane wreckage found in Rockies

Mary Dejevsky

An US warplane that disappeared during a training exercise on 2 April seemed finally to have been located yesterday, when a search aircraft spotted wreckage 12,500 feet up in the Rocky Mountains near Vail in Colorado. Melting snow had exposed pieces of painted metal jutting out from a steep mountain side.

An air force spokesman said he was "99.9 percent sure" that the missing A-10 had been found. The discovery had to rest some of the more fanciful speculation about the plane's disappearance, which included abduction by space aliens and the pilot's defection to an illegal extremist militia group.

The discovery was made less than 48 hours before the search, which has involved some of the most sophisticated US aeronautical technology, was due to be abandoned.

There was still no trace of the

plane crashed with four 500lb bombs intact.

According to some reports, the bombs may have exploded on impact. Seismic records studied by the air force, however, showed no evidence of any explosions in the region around the time the plane would have run out of fuel.

Even if the wreckage is that of the missing A-10, there remains the mystery of where the pilot is. Captain Craig Button, whose lifetime ambition had apparently been to become a fighter pilot, broke away from his training formation and flew the plane to the Rockies. The original theory, disputed by his parents and neighbours, was that he might have committed suicide because of family worries.

Spot where the search team found the jet. Photograph: AP

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Downtown ruin: Firefighters cruising past the burnt-out Security Building in Grand Forks, North Dakota, as they survey damage from the major blaze that broke out on Saturday in the business district of the city already submerged by Red River floods. Photograph: AP/St Paul Pioneer Press

## Brussels claims single currency will sideline UK

Sarah Helm  
Brussels

Plans to appoint a single political figure to represent countries inside the new "euro zone" on the international economic stage are being privately canvassed by member states.

The appointment of a "Mr Euro" figure could have far-reaching implications for Britain should the next government decide not to join the single currency, officials in Brussels concede.

Outside the euro zone, Britain could drastically lose influence in key economic clubs such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the Group of Seven (G7) in

industrial nations. Britain's voice could become drowned out by representatives of the new "big three" trading blocs: the euro, the dollar and the yen.

Furthermore, Britain's right to have a seat in such powerful international groups as the G7 could even be called into question if it does not join the single currency, say sources close to the discussions. The G7 may have to be reconstituted as a new "Group of Three".

The question of how the euro zone countries will promote their individual economic interests with a single voice after the launch of monetary union will be raised tomorrow, when the European Commission publishes a long awaited report on the euro's role on the world stage.

The report, passed yesterday to *The Independent*, sets out in detail how the new European currency is set to rival the US dollar as the most powerful economic entity in the world.

The Commission paints a rosy picture of a powerful, successful and stable euro dominating world trade for the next millennium.

The report's warning to those countries which do not join is clear. "The introduction of the new money will have major

consequences for member states which do not participate and for third countries."

In view of the massive worldwide influence of the single currency, the bloc will have to adapt its procedures in order to speak "with a common position" in international discussions. The report sidesteps any direct reference to the appointment of a single figure to sit at these world meetings.

Such a move is still viewed as sensitive as it would set the European Union further down the road towards federal style rule. However, officials in Brussels confirm that debate is underway about how the euro's "common position" could be presented. One option might be to appoint a single, weighty political figure. Another might be to appoint the chairman of the European finance ministers' council.

The political figure would always be accompanied by the chairman of the new European Central Bank.

In terms of world trade, he report says the euro will account for 30.9 per cent of all dealings, compared with 19.6 per cent for the dollar and 10.5 per cent for the yen. One third of world exports will be paid for in euros after the launch of the single currency, says the report.

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Richard Lloyd Parry  
Seoul

Last October, a 40-year-old woman named Kim Kyong Suk was murdered in one of the most brutal ways imaginable. Early one morning, as she was driving home from the bar which she owned, a gang of nine young men pulled her from her car, and forced her to tell them her bank PIN. After emptying her bank account, they drove her to an abandoned warehouse, dug a shallow pit and, having knocked her around with a baseball bat, buried her alive.

The killers called themselves the Makka-pa or "Forsaken Life Gang", and they were caught a few days later when police stopped them in their victim's car, a Japanese Honda Accord, and discovered the bloodied baseball bat. Almost as remarkable as the cruelty of their crime was its motivation. "I wanted to take revenge on the world," said one of the gang, 20-year-old Choe Chong Su, when the police asked him why he did it. "And I especially hate people who drive fancy foreign cars."

This shivs this provoked in Korea was unusually intense. For the last 10 months, the media and consumer groups in Seoul have been riding a wave of negative feelings about foreign imports, of which the Makka-pa affair was only the most sensational manifestation. Within days, Seoul newspapers were carrying articles about female motorists cancelling their orders for foreign cars for fear of similar crimes. "It definitely affected sales," says Alan Rushforth, executive director of Rover Korea. "It was a key factor in the message that it's a bad thing to be seen in an imported car."

Without doubt it is a tricky time to be a foreign businessman in South Korea. This week the head of the World Trade Organisation, Renato Ruggiero, became the latest in a series of high-level visitors to draw direct attention to an anti-import drive campaign which foreign diplomats and businessmen claim is being carried out with the approval and indirect encouragement of the Korean government.

The "frugality campaign", as it is called, took off last year when trade statistics began to reveal an alarming downturn in the economy. Last year, Korea's rate of growth was 6.8 per cent, healthy by European standards, but a jolting tumble from the 1995 rate of 9 per cent. More worrying was the fact that a country of 45 million people had a trade deficit of \$23.7bn, second only to the United States.

The mass of Korean imports are capital goods like fuel and heavy machinery - consumer goods make up little more than one-tenth of foreign sales, so a Buy Korean drive is likely to

make little difference to the trade deficit. But this has not prevented an intense and virulent campaign which has left foreign firms, including Marks & Spencer, Incafe and United Distillers, on the ropes.

Consumer organisations have launched aggressive campaigns to promote "rational" consumption and domestic produce. An organisation called the Korea Central Council of Nightspot Operators has banned imported drinks from its premises. Small shopkeepers say that they have been visited by representatives of the state tobacco monopoly and ordered not to sell foreign cigarettes under the threat of having their supply of the domestic brands withdrawn. "We've seen pamphlets with cartoons of Uncle Sam stuffing burning cigarettes into the mouths of children," says one whisky importer. "Xenophobic nationalism is the order of the day."

This year, the giant Daewoo conglomerate, which operates hotels, trading companies and department stores, announced

**Xenophobic nationalism is the order of the day. It is bad to be seen in a foreign car**

that it would cease to import all foreign goods. The government insists that the consumer groups are acting independently and that their activities are nothing to do with it, but the most insidious aspects of the campaign bear a markedly official stamp.

The recently opened branch of the French supermarket chain Carrefour has found itself the subject of repeated health checks, sometimes twice a day. Customs inspectors have become uncharacteristically zealous, delaying shipments and invoking the letter of the law on a consignment of slides imported by the new Seoul branch of M&S, for instance, the country of origin was written on stickers. Customs insisted it had to be carved into the sole.

Newspapers have carried countless stories with such headlines as "Government Should Put an End to Rurious Importing Disease". The government has declined all invitations to denounce the campaign and diplomats and officials are becoming increasingly impatient. "It's government by press release," says one diplomat, "and the beauty of it is that it's all deniable."

French

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orders  
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# French election pivots around euro

Paris - In the British election, the euro has been the wicked fairy. It was excluded from the ball, but insisted on turning up anyway. In the snap French parliamentary election, announced last night by Jacques Chirac, the European single currency will be, so the President hopes, the principal and honoured guest.

As ever, Britain and France are separated by more than 16 miles of water.

Mr Chirac may, however, be as disappointed as John Major with the shape and tone of the campaign, which will end in two rounds of voting on 25 May and 1 June. The President is breaking recent historical precedent by dissolving parliament early, essentially for tactical reasons. Like President Mitterrand, when he called an unnecessary referendum on the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, Mr Chirac hopes the popularity of Europe will

Chirac is trying to skate over a sea of domestic troubles by playing the Europe card, writes John Lichfield

commend his own unpopularity. He risks finding, as Mitterrand found, that his domestic difficulties will test French commitment to Europe, almost to destruction.

Mr Chirac gave three reasons for calling the election eight months early (backing the hunch of his Prime Minister, Alain Juppé, against his own better judgement). He said the poll would allow France to reject the divisive and destructive message of the far-right National Front; it would give new impetus to his government's state-shrinking reform programme; and, most of all, it would provide a clear, new mandate for France to enter the tough final negotiations on the single currency next spring.

The euro retains broad, but

maybe shallow, support in France. By making it the centre-piece of the campaign, Mr Chirac and Mr Juppé hope to skim over a sea of other economic, fiscal and legal troubles (not least of which is likely legal action this summer against two senior cabinet ministers).

The truth is that no new constitutional or political backing for the abolition of the franc was needed after the narrow vote in favour in 1992. The real arguments for bringing the poll forward were tactical: opposition parties were not ready and the economic and electoral climate was likely to turn against the centre-right majority in parliament as the year wore on.

What is true is that France has not yet debated the idea of a single European currency.

The euro retains broad, but

even if it has approved it. A thorough debate of EMU in France would be, democratically speaking, a healthy thing but it is not necessarily what Mr Chirac and Mr Juppé are seeking. If it happens, it may not go the way they would hope.

The social and economic reform programme undertaken unevenly since Mr Chirac was elected President in 1995, remains fundamentally unpopular. There is a grudging acceptance that the state must be shrunk; a desire for lower taxes and lighter social burdens on business. But there is also a broad anxiety that the privatisation of state industries, the reform of health policy, or pensions policy, will face France on an alien Anglo-Saxon course towards economic liberalism.

The great miracle, and mystery, is that no live political connection has been made between domestic reforms and spending cuts and the need to prepare the economy for EMU. The Front and the Communist Party, as well as dissident voices within the centre-right and centre-left, will use the election campaign to make precisely that connection if they can.

It is President Chirac and Mr Juppé's gamble - one among several - that such a debate would do most damage to the main opposition party, Lionel Jospin's Socialists.

For weeks Mr Jospin has been floundering in search of a coherent, alternative policy which would support the euro but offer a gentler alternative to the Juppé reforms.

The snap election also catches the Socialists (as Mr Juppé gambled it would) halfway through the feminisation and rejuvenation of their front-line troops.

By party edict, one third of candidates must be women. Most are chosen but few have started working on their constituencies. Even before the President's formal announcement, Mr Jospin seemed to fall into the EMU trap.

He said he still supported the single currency but not at any price and not if it required further deep cuts in public spending. The centre-right sprang on this apparent gaffe: one minister said Mr Jospin had "completely lost his pedals".

But this issue could play against the government, as

he has more riding on this campaign than Mr Juppé. If the Socialists, Communists and greens emerge with a majority - which the polls suggest is unlikely but possible - the President could face five years of "co-habitation" with a rag-tag centre-left parliament and government.

Looked at one way, Mr Chirac is betting his career on the tactical instinct of an unpopular Prime Minister, whose main attribute is that there is no coherent alternative. Put another way, Mr Chirac, the heir of de Gaulle, is gambling on the Euro-enthusiasm of a majority of the French people: their willingness to embrace the grand design and long-term promise of the euro, without examining too closely the short-term small print.

Mr Chirac is not, formally speaking, standing for election. His presidential mandate extends to 2002. But, in a sense,

## Saddam orders defiance of UN

Wailei Faleh  
Associated Press

Baghdad - In a fresh display of his trademark brinkmanship, President Saddam Hussein yesterday ordered his helicopters to defy a no-fly zone enforced by American jets and fly to the Iraqi-Saudi border to bring back Iraqis returning from the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca.

An official statement, carried by the state-run Iraqi News Agency, vowed "suitable response" if the United States interfered with the flights.

The White House warned Iraq against violating the no-fly zone, but said it would not attack the helicopters.

Western allies introduced the no-fly zone after Iraq's defeat in the 1991 Gulf War. It is meant to protect inhabitants of southern Iraq from reprisals by President Saddam's army after an unsuccessful anti-government revolt in the area.

The zone was extended in September to punish President Saddam for sending his army into northern Iraq to support one Kurdish faction against another. It now covers an area stretching from the southern suburbs of Baghdad down to Iraq's borders with Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

The Iraqi News Agency said helicopters would begin ferrying "sick and exhausted" pilgrims yesterday, but did not say how many aircraft would be involved or give the number of pilgrims.

But, by nightfall, there was no word from Iraqi officials or the state-run media if any flights had taken place and reporters in Baghdad were told by officials they would be flown to the Saudi border today.

The decision to use helicopters to ferry the pilgrims was made after a joint meeting yesterday of the Revolutionary Command Council and the leadership of the ruling Baath Party - Iraq's highest body. The meeting was chaired by President Saddam.

On 9 April, President Saddam sent an Iraqi Airways jet carrying 104 pilgrims to Saudi Arabia in defiance of United Nations sanctions imposed in 1990 for Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. The sanctions ban flights in and out of Iraq.

The United States failed last week to persuade the Security Council to condemn the Iraqi flight, settling instead for a mild rebuke.

Yesterday's announcement is the latest of several attempts by the Iraqi leadership to test the resolve of the international community, particularly the United States, to maintain Iraq's isolation.

Stephen Vines  
Hong Kong

## China's wide-eyed army tiptoes in



New territory: Major General Bryan Dutton (left) welcoming Major General Zhou Borong to Hong Kong yesterday

Photograph: AP

### Hong Kong handover

the first part of the advance guard which will prepare for the arrival of the full garrison after the British army departs on 30

June. Months of acrimonious negotiation preceded this historic event, which was something of an anti-climax. Packed

in eight mini-buses and cars the bemused looking soldiers made their way from the border to the Prince of Wales Barracks situated in the heart of Hong Kong's financial district.

Their commander, Major-General Zhou Borong, strode out of his modest black car looking pleased with himself and with the buildings which are about to become the PLA's new Hong Kong headquarters.

The British put on a suitably modest welcoming ceremony, most of which was not conducted in front of the media who both outnumbered - and looked more terrifying than - the incoming PLA force.

"This is a historic moment for both British and Chinese armed forces," boomed Major-General Bryan Dutton, the Commander of the British Forces, as he stood beside General Zhou, who gave a pre-dictated speech in Chinese.

British and Chinese negotiators are still hard at it trying to agree on how many more PLA troops will be allowed in before the handover of power. It seems likely that China will eventually post some 10,000 soldiers in Hong Kong, which is about the number Britain stationed in the colony before the big drawdown in 1994.

Hong Kong people remain wary of the PLA, following its role in the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. However, a poll which appeared in the Ming Pao newspaper yesterday

showed that only 29 per cent of those interviewed said they were afraid of the PLA being stationed in the territory. Thirty-five per cent had no such fears.



## Indian intrigue on hold as PM is sworn in

Jan McGirk  
New Delhi

India's mild-mannered foreign minister, Inder Kumar Gujral, was sworn in yesterday as Indian Prime Minister, thus ending three weeks of political intrigue and dithering in New Delhi. The capital seemed relieved to avoid the suspense of another national election and to get on with business as usual.

Mr Gujral is the third prime minister to take power in Delhi since a hung parliament was voted in last spring. The 77-year-old former diplomat has a white granite and resembles a beetle-browed Kentucky Colonel Sanders' stem but benign. Af-

ter he took oaths at the Presidential Palace, Mr Gujral promised "clean government" which would "root out corruption". But he did not refer to the Congress Party, whose abrupt withdrawal from the coalition precipitated this unexpected political crisis.

"Elections are costly but the price to be paid for instability and indecision is even greater," said Atal Bihari Vajpeyi, leader of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, who held the most seats in Parliament and would gain the most if Mr Gujral founders. To block the rise of the Hindu right, Congress has agreed to support a revamped United Front from outside.

Mr Gujral has a reputation for integrity and a long political track record. Although both his parents were ardent Congress Party workers and he himself was jailed in 1942 as a student leader of the Quit India movement, Mr Gujral resigned from the Congress Party shortly after the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi declared a state of emergency from 1975 to 1977. Later, as a member of parliament for the popular Janata Dal, Mr Gujral served twice as foreign minister.

Born before partition in Jhelum, now across the border, Mr Gujral drew praise for his ability to bridge differences with neighbouring Pakistan. In

siders hope that the new Prime Minister's vaunted statesmanship can heal the rifts between unlikely political allies, now that Mr Gowda has been sacrificed for stability.

"He is not an opportunist and that's what makes me apprehensive of his ability to lead a bunch of unprincipled opportunists who have got together in what is called the United Front," said Mani Shankar Aiyar, a New Delhi political columnist. The outgoing Finance Minister, P. Chidambaram, was clearly annoyed by Mr Gujral's selection - especially because his own regional party, the Tamil Maanil Congress, was briefly tipped as the favorite to

take over the United Front coalition. The TMC have now deserted the 13-partner ruling coalition.

But Mr Gujral, who is expected to take on the portfolio of Finance Minister while retaining his old job as Foreign Minister, intends to push through the pro-market budget put forward by the ousted government, probably by end of this month. Such a move will signal stability and may encourage foreign investment in the region.

With the appointment of Mr Gujral, after two successive prime ministers from south India, the political power base has again shifted to the traditional cattle-rearing land of the north.

## significant shorts

### Sudan treaty may pave way for a wider peace

Sudan's Islamic government and four southern rebel groups signed a treaty to end the 14-year-old civil war. A referendum will be held in which southerners will decide whether to secede. The treaty also gives the south more power running daily affairs, including using local customs instead of the Islamic law applied in the north. Former US president Jimmy Carter, who visited Sudan to discuss ways of stopping the war, said the treaty could pave the way for talks between the government and the Sudan People's Liberation Army, the main rebel group in the south. The four rebel groups that signed the treaty broke away from SPLA in the early 1990s.

AP - Khartoum

### Refugee aid effort suspended

Aid workers suspended operations in Rwandan refugee camps after an outbreak of looting and murder and attacks on foreigners by Zaireans. The murder of six local people sent Zaireans on a rampage, attacking foreigners and looting supplies near Kasese, 16 miles from Kisangani. Though it was not clear who burst into three Zairean homes and machine-gunned everyone inside, residents and Zairean rebel officials blamed Rwandans from nearby refugee camps.

AP - Kasese

### Bulgarian victor seeks backing

The Union of Democratic Forces, which won a big parliamentary majority in Saturday's elections, said it would meet other parties today to seek support for its programme to lead Bulgaria out of crisis. The UDF leader, Ivan Kostov, said his priorities were carrying out reforms agreed with the International Monetary Fund, fighting organised crime and corruption, and bringing Bulgaria into the European Union and Nato.

Reuters - Sofia

### Barbot berates Muscovites

Brigitte Bardot, actress turned animal-rights activist, attacked the Moscow authorities for a "planned massacre" of stray animals during the city's 50th anniversary. "I am... horrified to learn that preparations for the celebrations include a massacre of all the city's strays," she said in a letter.

Reuters - Paris

### Threat to sue Le Pen

An anti-racist group said it would sue the French far-right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen for saying gas chambers had nothing to do with anti-Semitism and repeating that they were a mere detail of the Second World War. France's Movement against Racism said Mr Le Pen's comment, in an interview with the *New Yorker*, following his espousal of racial inequality, was part of "a deliberate strategy of inciting racial hatred".

Reuters - Paris

### Allies pour into Vlora

Italian and Greek troops poured into the Albanian port of Vlora and secured a key bridgehead with a show of force. Nearly a week after soldiers from a multi-national security force secured two key ports of entry, Italian and Greek troops drove into Vlora as Italian marines splashed ashore in a seaborne landing.

Reuters - Vlora

### Chechens honour slain leader

Chechens gathered in a field to honour the separatist leader Dzhokhar Dudayev on the first anniversary of his death. He was killed by a Russian rocket which struck as he spoke on his satellite phone.

Reuters - Gekhi-Chu

### Pole jailed over prostitute ring

A Polish court jailed a man for seven years for sending young women to work in brothels in Germany and Switzerland. The provincial court in the north-western port city Szczecin also fined the 32-year-old Pole, identified only as Wlodek. Reuters - Warsaw



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## obituaries / gazette

## Norman Pirie

Norman Pirie was a biochemist distinguished for his pioneering work on plant viruses, a crusading advocate for the dietary use of leaf protein and, more broadly, a man of science who wrote with force and lucidity on many scientific questions of his time.

"Bill" Pirie was the third and youngest child of Sir George Pirie, the animal painter, and spent his early years in Torrance, Stirlingshire. The family lived in a large isolated house with enough space for all of them to pursue their own interests. Pirie's early schooling was disrupted for a number of reasons, including the development of a stammer. He maintained that this disruption allowed him more time in the lively, active atmosphere of his family and greatly benefited his intellectual development. From this upbringing he derived a strong sense of independence, self-reliance and frugality and a lifelong love of language and a vocabulary.

A Cambridge (Emmanuel College) Pirie discovered biochemistry, and blossomed in the creative atmosphere of the department of Sir Gowland Hopkins. On graduation Hopkins appointed him demonstrator, and his early research work was on glutathione and sulphur metabolism. He collaborated with Ashley Miles on the antigens of the pathogenic bacteria *Brucella abortus*, but of greater importance was his meeting Fred Bawden, who interested him in the problem of isolating the viruses responsible for causing diseases of potato. This was the beginning of 38 years of close friendship and collaboration that only ended with Bawden's death in 1972.

The collaboration continued

following their move to Rothamsted Experimental Station in Harpenden, Bawden moving there in 1936 and Pirie in 1940. Here the scope of their work was extended and they accomplished the separation in semi-crystalline or crystalline form of 12 or more viruses or strains of viruses, including tobacco mosaic virus (TMV), and showed that they all contain nucleic acid of the type now called RNA, the genetic material of viruses. This was work of a high technical standard, and was, moreover, in a competitive area. Others, including W.M. Stanley, had previously claimed to have isolated TMV and made great reputations; but their preparations had few of the properties that we accept for TMV today.

If chance played any part in Pirie and Bawden's discovery of viral RNA, we must remember Pasteur's dictum that "chance favours only a prepared mind". Both Pirie and Bawden had prepared minds. They were sceptical of the then current concepts of "purity" when applied to large molecules, and sceptical too of the dominant emphasis on proteins. They were prepared to look for other components in virus preparations and acknowledge their possible importance. They realised that viral RNA might carry virus activity and tested this possibility. For technical reasons the results were negative, and it was left until 1956 for others to establish the infectivity of RNA.

Pirie's mind was also well prepared for the striking semi-crystalline nature of concentrated suspensions of TMV. He delighted in the coloured sheens that appeared when the opalescent suspensions were

swirled in a flask and viewed by polarised light. He correctly interpreted this streaming birefringence as the property of rod-like particles and used it to estimate their size. With characteristic flair, the birefringence was demonstrated at a Royal Society soirée when dilute suspensions of TMV were stirred by goldfish and sea horses. Pirie joked that, initially, suspensions of TMV were as popular with fish physiologists as with plant pathologists.

By the 1950s Pirie's interest shifted and he had begun his ardent campaign to promote extracted leaf protein as a beneficial and cheap human food. This work had begun with government encouragement during the early days of the Second World War, when there was concern over food resources. Pirie recognised the potential of leaf proteins which are indigestible in intact leaves and are only very inefficiently converted to edible forms by herbivores.

After the war the project developed to encompass the nutrition of the world's increasing population. With a small team of engineers, chemists, nutritionists and cooks, Pirie developed a variety of machines to disrupt suitable leaves, press the juice out of the fibre and steam-precipitate its proteins. Perhaps the most useful of these "mechanical cows" were the smaller "village units" that were designed to be used by rural communities with limited technical resources.

With the help of charities, these units were exported to many less developed countries. Getting them installed and functional, and getting the green product incorporated into ac-

ceptable food, proved difficult, and involved social and political problems and prejudices. Although the nutritional value of the protein concentrates has been amply demonstrated in India and elsewhere, the project has not taken off in the way Pirie hoped and expected. The reasons are complex and it may partly be that the world protein deficit predicted during the 1950s has not materialised as expected. Nevertheless the project continues and it may well yet become needed; if and when it does, Pirie will have provided its necessary theoretical infrastructure.

Since his formal retirement Pirie studied beta-carotene, or pro-vitamin A content of his leaf extracts and became convinced that in the present circumstances, this was more important than its protein. The dietary deficiency of pro-vitamin A affects many hundreds of thousands of people worldwide, resulting in much preventable blindness. This situation was well known to Antoinette (Tony) Pirie, Pirie's late wife, who as an internationally distinguished eye-biochemist monitored and crusaded against it. Pirie observed that the beta-carotene of his preparations was unstable, and tried to understand the destructive mechanisms and to prevent them. His views on the origin of life were characteristically individual and he was sceptical of those who sought its origin in nucleic acid-like compounds produced in the "primeval soup" of the prebiotic earth. Forty years ago Pirie's friend J.D. Bernal, the distinguished physicist, wrote a book on this subject. Pirie was unimpressed, and in a sternly instructed review, he sternly instructed Bernal to emulate the cobbler and "stick to his last".

More generously, he conceded that Bernal would need as many arms as the mythical giant Briareus to attend adequately to all the lasts on which he was qualified to bang. In thus describing Bernal, Bill Pirie might well have been describing himself.

W. S. Pierpoint

**Norman Wingate Pirie**, bio-chemist; born Torrance, Stirlingshire 1 July 1907; Demonstrator, Biochemical Laboratory, Cambridge 1932-40; Virus Physiologist, Rothamsted Experimental Station 1940-46; Head of Biochemistry Department 1947-73; FRS 1949; married 1931 Antoinette Putey (died 1991; one son, and one daughter); died Harpenden, Hertfordshire 29 March 1997.



Pirie demonstrating a prototype leaf-protein extraction machine - his 'mechanical cow' - on the occasion of his award of the Rank Prize for Nutrition and Agronomy, 1976

The Presbyterianism which is still deeply embedded in the Scots character militates against many things. This is most evident when it comes to advertising personal success and achievement. The belief that "you work hard, but don't talk about it" is one reason why the careers of women like the architect Margaret Brodie have attracted so little attention; another was - in the days before "girl power" - being a successful woman in a man's world.

There is, however, much about Margaret Brodie which deserves to be recognised. She was one of the first fully qualified women architects in Scotland, graduating from Glasgow in 1928, the year of Charles Rennie Mackintosh's death. Following the award of a prestigious Rome scholarship and a brief period with the Glasgow



Miss Brodie: tweed county woman cum femme fatale

firm Stewart and Paterson, she was employed in the London office of Sir John Burnet, Tait and Lorne, one of Britain's most successful inter-war architectural practices. One of her first tasks was to work on the detail

of Thomas Tait's drawings for the Infectious Diseases Hospital in Paisley. When the hospital opened in July 1936, it was among the most advanced of its kind in Europe.

Tommy Tait was to use Brodie to brilliant effect in his most celebrated project, the 1938 Glasgow Empire Exhibition. For this last great outpouring of imperial fervour on depressed Clydeside, Brodie not only designed the 15,000-square-foot "Women of the Empire Pavilion", but established the site and supervised much of the day-to-day operations from her drawing board in a wooden hut in Bellahouston Park. This was an extraordinary undertaking in the male-dominated world of 1930s Glasgow. Brodie was undaunted by the task and by her own admission "had the time of my life".

Born in Largs, an Ayrshire seaside town, in 1907 Margaret Brodie was one of the three daughters of a comfortably-off chief civil engineer for the Glasgow and South Western Railway Company. The Brodies came from that class of small landowners who were the backbone of Victorian rural Scotland. They were thrifty, hard-working and independent. Religion was central to everyday life. Margaret's father was a dominant figure. He was strict and held education to be very important, even for girls. Margaret was sent to "a good Glasgow school" before receiving "a classical architectural training". Like many of her contemporaries she was not impressed by the work of Mackintosh - "he was old hat" - although later in her career she was to be involved in restoration work at

Mackintosh's famous Hill House. It was American architecture that inspired her: "I admired the Chicago school, it was modern classicism."

In 1945 Brodie set up her own architectural practice, and much of her work was subsequently to be with the Church of Scotland, either designing new churches or advising on the restoration and extension of existing buildings. There was also much work on the sympathetic restoration of vernacular buildings, particularly in Lochwinnoch. Despite her professed love of classicism over all, Brodie like Tait was adaptable, and one of her churches in Port Glasgow (1958) was far from traditional. Here with its roof supports at diagonal corners, Brodie created a building which gave the impression of a dropped pocket handkerchief.

At the same time, her private work was combined with a lectureship at the Royal College in Glasgow (now Strathclyde University). Her students remembered her as unique: being the only woman on the staff, hardworking, demanding, slightly eccentric and undervalued by a generation of 1950s students because of her more exotic foreign styles. In her private life she remained unmarried, her career managed in partnership with her sister Jean who, herself a journalist, had been assistant to the publisher William Collins.

"Miss Brodie" or "Miss Margaret", as she was always known in the Renfrewshire village of Lochwinnoch, where she lived in the picturesque Mill House, was a highly complex character. Deep conservatism was frequently replaced by the most liberal of views. Conventional

behaviour, grace before meals, and an admiration for the "county set", was combined in equal measure by a love of modern art and highly eccentric, often quite outrageous behaviour. In her role as self-appointed critic of a local art exhibition she stood on many toes. Friends would go to any lengths not to be a passenger in her Porsche and to avoid the ubiquitous fish and chips she served for lunch.

The eccentricity and the bluntness were a mask. Miss Brodie was in fact a very shy and deeply sensitive woman, who had succeeded in a male-dominated occupation. Despite this she hated feminism. "Never be a feminist, that's important", she would advise her young female friends.

Christopher C. Lee

**Margaret Brodie**, architect; born Largs, Ayrshire 1907; died Beith 14 April 1997.

The spectacle of enormous furry monsters coveting with public figures, from Hillary Clinton and Barbara Bush to Cab Calloway and Burt Lancaster, would not have been possible without the colourful imagination of Jon Stone.

Regarded as one of the best writers of children's television, Stone helped to create such beloved characters as Big Bird, the Cookie Monster and Oscar the Grouch, that have been a staple of childhood entertainment since their creation nearly 30 years ago.

Over the course of his career

he won 18 Emmy Awards - the television equivalent of the Oscars - and was widely credited as being the major creative force behind *Sesame Street*, the educational programme for children learning to read and write, which relied heavily on cartoons and puppets to convey its message. And, at the peak of its popularity, was watched by eight out of ten US preschool children. In collaboration with Jim Henson, he wrote *Sex and Violence with the Muppets*, the template for the extraordinarily popular *The Muppet Show*.

In 1968 Stone helped bring Henson into the creative team working on the first episodes of *Sesame Street*. Stone was the

original head writer and producer of *Sesame Street* and remained its principal director until last year. "He was probably the most brilliant writer of children's television in America," said Joan Ganz Cooney, one of the programme's co-founders.

Stone's brilliance was to be able to create characters that appealed not only to children but to adults. "He managed to give them a saucy and edgy kind of humour at the same time," said Christopher Cerf, a creative contributor on the show.

In creating Big Bird, a man-sized yellow bird, Stone and

when poison gas was used for the first time by Germany, 1915; British forces made a raid on Zeebrugge, 1918; Wilfred Ellingford, Bawden, composer, 1920; Philip William May, caricaturist, 1924; Lenin (Vladimir Ilich Ulyanov), statesman, 1920; Ellen Anderson Gholson Glasgow, novelist, 1927; Peter Bowring, former chairman, C.I.T. Publishing, 1927; Mr Glen Campbell, country singer, 1928; Miles Yvette Chauvigné, prima ballerina, 1928; Sir John Chilcott, Permanent Under-Secretary, Northern Ireland Office, 1928; Mr George Cole, actor, 1928; Miss Carol Drinkwater, actress, 1928; Mr Alan Dukes, former leader of the Fine Gael party in Ireland, 1928; Mr Peter Frampton, musician, 1928; Sir William Gage, High Court judge, 1928; Mr Lloyd Honeyghan, boxer, 1928; Mr Robin Hutton, merchant banker, 1928; Mr Ronald Hynd, choreographer, 1928; Mr Nico Ladenis, restaurateur, 1928; Dr Geoff Marshall, Provost, Queen's College, Oxford, 1928; Lord Menihin, violinist, 1928; Mr Jack Nicholson, actor, 1928; The Earl of Oxford and Asquith, former Governor of the Seychelles, 1928; Miss Margaret Pereira, forensic scientist, 1928; Sir Edward Rathford, former ambassador to Norway, 1928; Mr R.J. Ristic, former tennis player, 1928; Prof. Sir Eric Scovell, physician, 1928; Mr Charles Sisson, author and poet, 1928; Mrs David Summerscale, Headmaster, Westminster School, 1928; Mr Robert Wade-Gery, executive director and vice-chairman, E&W, 1928.

**Birthdays**  
1766: José de Madrazo y Kuntz, painter, 1781; William Limon, landscape painter, 1791; Wilfred Ellingford, Bawden, composer, 1850; Philip William May, caricaturist, 1864; Lenin (Vladimir Ilich Ulyanov), statesman, 1870; Ellen Anderson Gholson Glasgow, novelist, 1874; Alexander Feodorovich Karensky, general, 1881; Otto Rank, psychologist, 1884; Sergei Rachmaninoff, composer, 1891; Kathleen Mary Ferris, contralto, 1912; Julian Ross, OBE, physician, 1914; Sir Sidney Nolan, painter, 1914; Sir Peter Hall, actor, 1917; Dennis John Tradescant, 1652; James Hargreaves, inventor of the spinning jenny, 1770; John Conne, landscape painter, 1821; Thomas Rowlandson, cartoonist, 1827; Richard Trevithick, steam engineer, 1833; Victoria Anne-Edwards Lalo, composer, 1872; William Stubbs, historian and bishop, 1901; Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, statesman, 1908; John Passmore Edwards, newspaper proprietor and philanthropist, 1911; Jeppe Asbjørn, poet and novelist, 1912; Frederick Henry Royce, motor pioneer, 1913; Sir Francis (Frank) J. Short, engraver and painter, 1914; Ignatius Roy D'Alton MacCormac, 1915; Sir Basil Dean, actor, 1917; Mr R.J. Ristic, former tennis player, 1918; Prof. Sir Eric Scovell, physician, 1918; Richard Milhous Nixon, 37th US president, 1913. On this day: Pedro Alvarez de Cabral reached Brazil and claimed it for Portugal, 1500; the Royal Society was incorporated, 1662; Napoleon defeated the Piedmontese at the Battle of Monfalcone, 1796; the Baltic Exchange, London, was founded (as the Baltic Club), 1823; St. Helena became a Crown Colony, 1834; the packet ship *Shropshire* crossed the Atlantic for the first time under compound steam power, the voyage taking 16 days, 10 hours, 1868; the second Battle of Ypres began, 1915.

**Anniversaries**  
1876: Isabella, Queen of Castile and Leon, 1451; Henry Fielding, novelist, 1707; Emmanuel Kant, philosopher, 1724; Madame de Staél (Anne-Louise-Germaine Necker, Baronne de Staél-Holstein), writer,

Henson wanted to instil curiosity in children. "They wanted a character who was bigger than the kids but didn't know everything," said Cerf. "They wanted to show that everyone makes mistakes, including adults, that big characters have things to learn, so they came up with this huge bird."

Stone was also the producer, director and writer of a number of projects involving *Sesame Street* characters, including the travolges *Big Bird in China* (1983) and *Big Bird in Japan* (1989). Both shows, Stone later explained, were an extension of

the philosophy that the programmes should be more than a children's show. "We set out to make a show that children and adults could watch together, and children could ask questions," he said.

Stone was also the writer of children's books, including *The Monster at the End of This Book* (1971), a Muppet tale featuring another furry monster, Grover. The book sold more than 10 million copies and was followed by *Another Monster at the End of This Book* last year.

If there was any character that Stone most closely resembled himself it was Oscar the Grouch. "Oscar was a character who was very contrary and would make outrageous statements about everything, but... he showed tolerance for different points of view," said Cerf.

"John was that way himself, he never took himself too seriously and loved to be silly and outrageous. He was a little bit of an anarchist. He loved it if there was a sketch in which he could throw puppet sheep up in the air."

Edward Helmsone

otherwise than at the suit of the Attorney-General (not least where he had refused his fiat for relator proceedings), and when existing, not merely prospective, conduct was involved and a declaration of criminality was sought, rather than one of non-criminality.

The Director disputed that Camelot was not concerned about the quality of the Director's decision-making, but rather the continuation of the 49's scheme. The direct and obvious way of ending that was by Camelot itself prosecuting rather than by seeking to force the Director's hand.

49's Limited submitted that the court should not entertain Camelot's challenge, since if successful it would inevitably result in stigmatising a third party's conduct as criminal.

The decision was not one of high principle. The court should adopt a flexible approach to the exercise of its declaratory jurisdiction in this field. The only rigid rule was, following *Imperial Tobacco Ltd v Attorney-General [1981] AC 718*, that once criminal proceedings had begun the civil court's jurisdiction should not intervene.

Camelot acknowledged that judicial review would be granted "only where there was no other equally effective and convenient remedy" (see per Lord Widgery CJ in *R v Hillingdon London Borough Council, ex parte Royco Homes Ltd [1974] QB 720 at 728*), but submitted

that the end of the matter. Leave would therefore be granted, and the substantive challenge dismissed. Camelot could then, if they wished, seek to carry their argument forward.

Kate O'Hanlon, Barrister

lawful lottery, and were not prepared to prosecute its promoters. The Attorney-General had also refused Camelot's request to be allowed to bring a relator action.

Lord Justice Simon Brown said that the basis of the proposed challenge was that the Director's refusal to prosecute was founded on an error of law, namely a failure to recognise that 49's scheme constituted an unlawful lottery. The central question was whether it was a case which Camelot ought properly to be allowed to argue in the context of a judicial review challenge to the refusal to prosecute.

Camelot had referred the proposed scheme to the Director of Public Prosecutions for a judicial review of the decision of the Director of Public Prosecutions not to prosecute 49's Ltd for running an illegal lottery, but dismissed the substantive application.

Camelot acknowledged that judicial review would be granted "only where there was no other equally effective and convenient remedy" (see per Lord Widgery CJ in *R v Hillingdon London Borough Council, ex parte Royco Homes Ltd [1974] QB 720 at 728*), but submitted

that the court should not entertain Camelot's challenge, since if successful it would inevitably result in stigmatising a third party's conduct as criminal.

In short, but for one consideration, the application for leave to move would have been unhesitatingly refused. However, the contrary view was properly arguable and the point might be thought to be of some importance.

A refusal of leave would spell the end of the matter. Leave would therefore be granted, and the substantive challenge dismissed. Camelot could then, if they wished, seek to carry their argument forward.

Kate O'Hanlon, Barrister

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# A vote for Sinn Fein is a vote for violence

The people of Ireland have expressed a yearning for a lasting peace settlement and a new democracy. If this challenge is to be translated into reality then we must all respond to it with courage and imagination. Not *The Independent's* words, but those of Gerry Adams, parliamentary candidate and would-be new democrat. It is easy to condemn the hypocrisy and self-importance of these sentiments, penned by an apologist for terrorism in his autobiography. But condemnation is not enough. It is easy to satirise the "courage and imagination" with which the IRA has prosecuted its pre-election campaign of disruption in England. It has certainly been imaginative, if the courage involved in telephone hoaxing is less apparent. But mockery is not enough. It is all too easy to point out the counter-productive illogic of the IRA-Sinn Fein campaign for a united Ireland. The idea that, by forcing much of the population of London yesterday and great swathes of Britain last week to get on their bikes to go to work, the cause of Irish republicanism is advanced is moonshine.

The people of London were pushed into deep thought about whether the car economy really is sustainable, whether global warming really has changed the weather, whether there is anything that can be done to thwart tactical disruption of British national life

by the use of code-words and the occasional real bomb. The one thing they did not think about, except possibly when prompted by journalists and phone-ins and six-year-olds repeatedly asking "Why?", was about the injustice suffered by the nationalist population of Northern Ireland since 1922.

And if they had thought about it, they were hardly likely to proclaim, as they sat in what seemed like city-wide gridlock, "My goodness, that Gerry Adams is quite right, after all." Many people in Great Britain already think the troops should be withdrawn from Northern Ireland and the territory handed to the Irish Republic – but mainly on the basis that it is a tangled mess and should be left to the Irish themselves to sort out. But those who disagree, mainly because a majority in Northern Ireland wants to remain in the United Kingdom, are not going to be swayed by terrorism.

If they were swayed, they might do worse than read Mr Adams's autobiography, which would only have the effect of strengthening their original view. The *impassioned* call for political leadership all round, a new democracy and "an inclusive process of negotiation" is negated by an unyielding statement of the goal, described as "a settlement between the people of Britain and the people of the island of Ireland, based on respect for our mutual independence", which is only a wordy way

of saying "a united Ireland". The book confirms that the plausible Sinn Fein leader, who at the weekend proclaimed

"a dream" of a peaceful Ireland, is a spokesman for the men of violence and indeed that he was one of them himself. For, while Londoners, Mancunians and Grand National racegoers might tut with irritation while grudgingly admitting relief that the new IRA strategy has not killed anyone on the mainland (yet), it must be remembered that in Northern Ireland the IRA is still torturing, intimidating and killing. Last month the IRA shot a soldier dead; earlier this month it shot and almost killed a policewoman.

It is, however, not enough to condemn this odious twisting of the language of democracy, in which violence can be justified as a way of seeking a united Ireland, when the people of Northern or Southern Ireland reject the violence and, on these terms, the forced unification too. Why? Because Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness do represent a community of real people in Northern Ireland. Sinn Fein may represent only 15 per cent of the vote, but the sense of grievance that animates this section of our society is enough to sustain a

campaign of terror for decades to come. It has to be recognised that Mr Adams and Mr McGuinness are walking a tightrope, trying to retain their credibility with the dark forces behind them while attempting to deliver something concrete for their constituents.

So, what way forward after the election? In the long term, the right approach must be to make the republican minority feel that its aspirations are taken seriously – however incompatible they are with the aspirations of others. That is the underlying argument for including Sinn Fein in all-party talks. It is an urgent matter: the new government, of whichever party, could face a crisis in Northern Ireland within weeks. The Orange marching season has already begun, with the hot month of July not far away. John Major got stuck on the weapons issue, but there is a case for a new Labour government being bolder. History would not condone Tony Blair for talking to terrorists who retained their arms in the short term if the outcome were a lasting peace or even, more likely, a succession of temporary cease-fires which might grow into a longer peace. If it did not succeed, what would have been lost?

But before then, the general election itself offers a chance to engage with the republican communities of West Belfast, Mid-Ulster and West Tyrone, the only three constituencies which could elect Sinn Fein MPs. When Sinn

Fein polled its record 15.5 per cent in the Forum elections last year, it was widely interpreted as a vote for a new cease-fire and for the channelling of republican demands into the democratic sphere. But if Sinn Fein polls well on Thursday week, it will be interpreted as a vote for violence and for continuation of the campaign of terror. Let us send a message to the electors in those seats: this time, vote for anyone except Sinn Fein.

## Labour's passion for purple

What happens when you take bright, pillar-box socialism red and mix it with rich, aristocratic Tory blue? You can try this at home, but the answer is purple. Question: why is purple the new Labour colour? Does it have anything to do with a subtle suggestion from Millbank spin-people that they are moving deftly rightwards? Will the New Labour purple deepen and deepen so that, one day, when no one is paying attention, it suddenly looks indistinguishable from blue – a good colour to go with Union Jacks and bulldogs? What a cynical thought: we are assured that the reason is simply that purple is the "colour of passion". Fair enough. But a passion for what?



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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### What can the IRA hope to achieve?

Sir: Could a spokesman for the IRA explain to me as a working, travelling Londoner what my response should be to bomb threats which close London stations? My first instinct is to curse the IRA and then maybe all the Irish, North and South, but that is neither fair nor helpful.

If the bombs are a punishment for past history someone could argue a justification, but no progress is made to a future solution. Does the IRA (and Sinn Fein) not realise that the obstacle to their wishes is not the British public but a large number of the people of Northern Ireland? I do not say "majority", because I believe and hope that the majority want peace and the possibility to live their lives without disruption.

For nearly 30 years, IRA tactics have been met only with intransigence and retaliation. I do not understand what the current campaign can, or hopes to, achieve. NICHOLAS HOOTON London SE8

### Education for a rich élite

Sir: You are right (leading article, 21 April) to suggest that politicians are only pretending that education is their first, second and third priority.

If it really were, not only would they think their ideas through more clearly, but they (and you) would devote some space to the plight of tertiary education, public spending on which (excluding tuition fees and maintenance grants) puts the UK second from bottom among OECD nations.

You are also right to dismiss simplistic appeals for a return to selective schools. However, you are wrong to imply that selection no longer exists, or that current selection criteria are defensible.

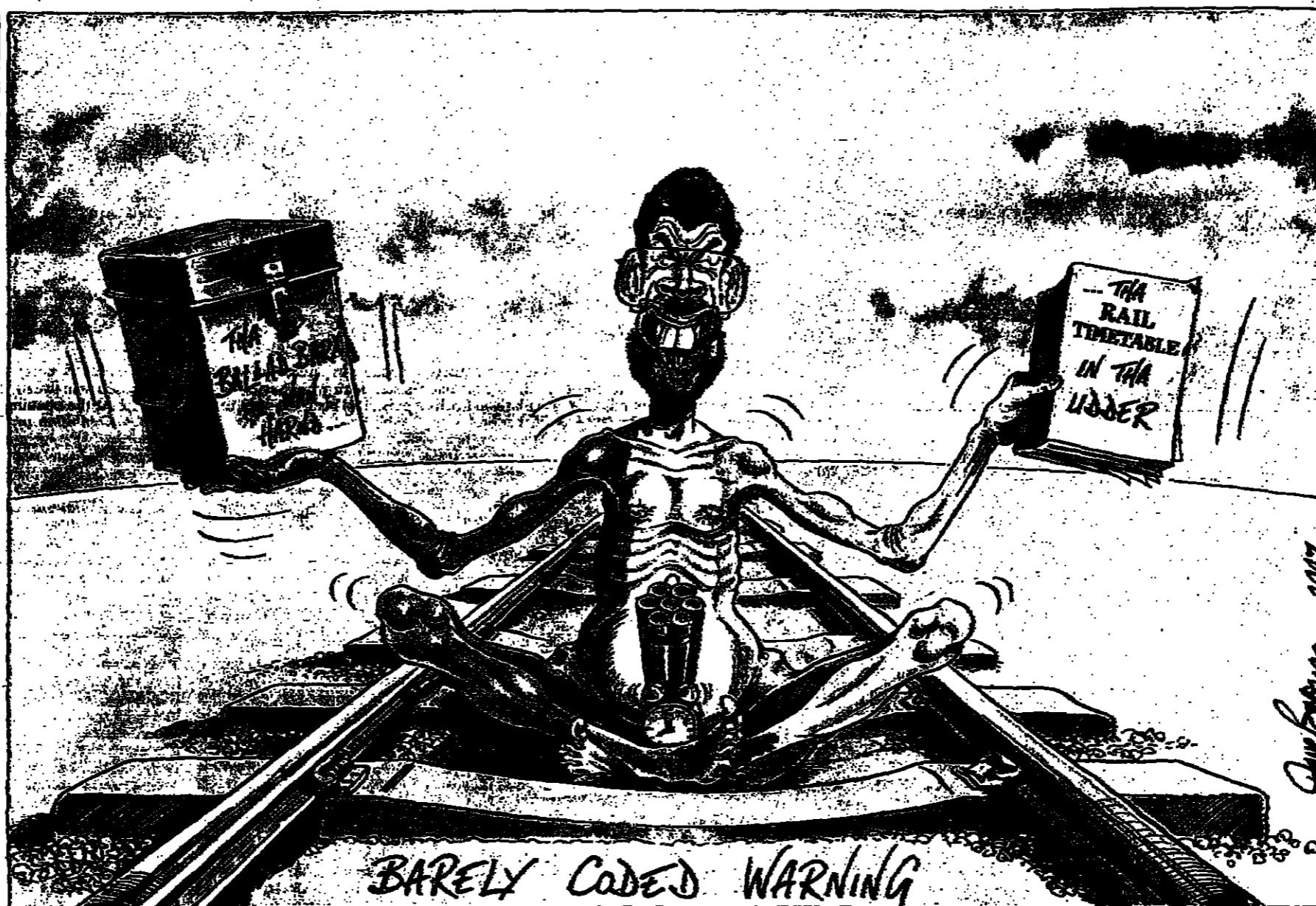
Figures published last week reveal that whereas a majority of the young people from the most affluent neighbourhoods enter higher education, only 10 per cent of young people from the poorest neighbourhoods do so.

This is because the schools serving richer neighbourhoods (particularly the public schools) operate their selection primarily on the criterion of affluence. We have moved from a system of higher education which was small though largely meritocratic to one which is larger but increasingly elitist. This is an issue which no party is addressing squarely.

P.K. BURGESS President Association of University Teachers London W1

Sir: Your correspondents (Letters, 19 April) rightly point out how all the political rhetoric about the education system can be undercut by observing where government ministers send their children to be educated and how much they are to be educated.

But before jumping to the conclusion that abolition of private education is the key to improving state schools, let us be cautious. The last 10 years of the National Curriculum (this does not apply to the private sector) have seen a remarkable shift in perception of what schools are all about. Both Labour and Conservatives see



education as having an overwhelmingly economic purpose. There are levels of attainment to be reached, norms to be met. Testing, assessment, measures of value are the new language. Where have the liberal values of education gone? If they are thriving anywhere it will be in the private sector, albeit a small part of it.

A healthy education system needs more than an equitable distribution of resources; if it is to be worth having, it needs room for dissent and variety. Education is too important to be left in the hands of the Government.

PETER POOL Shipley, West Yorkshire

Sir: Your article on "phony addresses and religious conversions" (17 April) caught my attention as for several years I served as a governor of a local Church of England infant school with special responsibility for admissions. This was, and still is, a highly popular school which therefore had to apply strict criteria for admission.

We used a simple way of verifying a child's home address which requires more than a compliant friend to falsify that, to insist on seeing the child benefit book or document for that particular child. When an offer of a place was made, the parent or carer was asked to return the acceptance in person and at the same time to show the child benefit document to the school secretary, if they declined to do this, the offer of a place would be withdrawn. I believe that in this way we were able to eliminate the sort of dishonesty

over addresses described in your article.

JOANNA FRENCH London SE21

Sir: On page 3 of today's edition (21 April) you reveal that Eton College, a charitable institution used by the very wealthy, has assets of £131m. On Page 9 a story on hospital waiting lists now exceeding 1.1 million. On the letters page a plea for continued state subsidy for the wealthy to educate their children.

Surely the Tory campaign will reveal plans to stop this waste of public money. By shutting more hospitals.

JONATHAN DUMBELL London E11

### Aid with too many strings

Sir: Your front page lead of 18 April was a vainglory attempt to raise the election campaign to issues of aid and development. It rightly emphasised the good work done by Chancellor Kenneth Clarke in getting Western countries to agree to debt relief proposals; and contrasted this with the role of the IMF and the USA in particular, in delaying their introduction and tying them to the kind of economic shock treatment seen in Eastern Europe.

However, your economics editor, Diane Coyle, does no service to an informed debate by telling readers that "the

Conservative manifesto does not mention aid, while Labour's affirms its commitment to spending 0.7 per cent of national income on overseas aid". In truth, not only does the Tory manifesto mention aid, but in many respects it says much the same about it as Labour, while both parties make clear that the UN's target of 0.7 per cent of GDP is a spending objective, not a promise.

In one crucial respect, though, they are rather different. The Tories want to focus aid on countries "growing towards self-sufficiency under democratic government", while Labour wants to target aid to those in greatest need. While the Conservatives seem to expect countries such as Rwanda to play by "Westminster rules", Labour is interested only in the poorest of the poor.

But where does any of this leave those developing countries that aren't starving, or show precious little sign of "growing towards democracy"?

NEIL PATRICK London N7

### British Library goes online

Sir: I sympathise with the frustration experienced by Mike Ainscough (letter, 16 April) in trying to gain online access to the holdings of the British Library, but can assure him that his frustration will be short-lived.

On 20 May, in response to our

users' needs and wishes, the British Library will launch OPAC 97, which will provide free access via the World Wide Web to the main reading room catalogues. Anyone with Internet access and a Web browser will have access to OPAC 97 without the need for any additional software or system.

A digitisation programme comparable to that of the Library of Congress would need funding comparable to that given to our American colleagues. Sadly, such resources seem unlikely to be forthcoming from this or any other government in the near future.

BRIAN LANG Chief Executive The British Library London NW1

### Church and state belong apart

Sir: Andrew Brown's article "Frailty, thy name is Williamson" (15 April) raises one big question. Not that of the ordination of women priests (as a Nonconformist I recognise the priesthood of all believers), but that of the disestablishment of the Church of England. At a time when constitutional reform is back on the political agenda no one seems to be asking whether it is about time we reviewed the constitutional anomaly that is the Anglican Church.

The legal shenanigans over the ordination of women priests instigated by Paul Williamson are both costly and absurd. Why

should the state have a say in internal church matters? It is about time that we recognised that church and state are two separate institutions with two different goals. The church is to preach the gospel and function as salt and light in society. The state is to provide law and order and national defence, and to oversee the economy and so on. The relationship should be an indirect one, with the church bringing moral pressure to bear upon the state and the state upholding freedom of religion.

NICK CATERMOLE London SW16

Sir: While we were driving in Norfolk recently my daughter said that she felt sorry for the Conservatives. I asked why. She said that they all seemed to be homeless: after all, nearly all of their election posters are in fields and not outside houses, like those of the other parties.

HUMPHREY BORGNISS North Elmham, Norfolk

Sir: The Tory manifesto claims at page 44 that Britain under the party's stewardship is "A World Leader in Sports, Arts and Culture". Arts, perhaps; culture, even; but sport? I may, as a residual Oz, be slightly biased. Even so, doesn't this make it as Prantastic as the Boast of the Campaign?

BRUCE PAGE London EC2

### Ambridge lobby

Sir: Your report that the Secretary of State for the Environment has changed his mind on the planting of lucrative flax in an East Sussex site of special scientific interest surely has little to do with the merits of nature conservation. Rather it has everything to do with the fact that Simon Pemberton, middle-class hate figure and certain Tony in *The Archers*, intended to replant the whole of Grange Farm with it once the Grundys were evicted.

Mr Gummer's political antennae remain as finely tuned as his research assistant's radio.

CHRIS MOORHOUSE Sheffield

# The sacred sites of Britain

Tomorrow sees the launch of a huge project to protect stone circles, ruined abbeys and sanctified sites around the world. Paul Vallely expands on the definition of sacred and suggests some precious places of his own

**J**ust to be on the safe side they took the statue and burned it publicly in Smithfield as if it were a living heretic. The object in question was the Black Virgin of Wimborne which had apparently drifted miraculously up from the bottom of a holy well in the 12th century and had become the centre of a cult of healing and the focus of pilgrimage. At the Reformation the early English Protestants did not, of course, believe that the lump of wood possessed any supernatural powers, but it was best not to take any chances.

For the next 400 years the well remained sealed beneath the 10th century church of St Mary's in the north London suburb – though until 1902 the parish had to pay an annual fine of £1 6s 0d, originally imposed by Henry VIII, in penance for having ever given the statue

Tomorrow the Archbishop of Canterbury will visit the re-opened well, with its new black madonna, to bless the waters in the company of representatives of eight other faiths – from Bahá'í to Taoist – in the launch of an international Sacred Land project which seeks to protect sanctified sites in more than nine different countries.

The enterprise is something of a success even before it begins. With a five-year budget in this country of £750,000 – backed by the Duke of Edinburgh and funded by the Worldwide Fund for Nature, the Pilkington Foundation and the Japanese organic agriculture giant MOA International

– it set out to sponsor 2,000 sites by the year 2000 but has adopted 700 already and is now aiming for 5,000 in the UK alone.

But in addition to the predictable stone circles, ruined abbeys, sacred groves, holy wells and old pilgrimage routes its organisers have decided – in pursuit of their claim that everyone in the country is within 10 miles of a sacred site – that they have to invent some new ones. "The creation of new sacred places, particularly in urban areas," is one of the project's bullet-point aims.

You might think they would have no trouble in finding icons of our modern secular ideologies. How about a shrine at the legendary Mr Sifte's shop where the Oasis songwriter Noel Gallagher bought music when he was 16? Or the King's Road where Kate Moss and other queens of the catwalk were first spotted by fashion scouts? Or the square foot of turf at Selhurst Park where Manchester United's David Beckham scored from the halfway line on the first day of the season? Or, for those who locate sanctity in the innocence of childhood, the bridge in Ashdown Forest where Pooh sticks were invented.

This is not quite what they have in mind. At the launch of the Sacred Land project in Scotland last week the main ceremony took place in the

town square in the ancient burgh of Wigton, a depressed little place where unemployment is high, shops are boarded up and the town centre is empty.

Local worthy Andrew Patterson (a former clergyman and now an SNP councillor) spoke of the dereliction in the heart of the town since changes in agriculture forced the closure of its two creameries producing worse social indicators than urban problem areas like Toxteth. The Lord Lieutenant, Major Edward Ott Ewing, read out a letter from Prince Philip underscoring the close relationship between religions and their attitude to conservation. And the project's guiding light, Martin

Palmer, insisted that in a place like this "it isn't enough just to do an urban redevelopment plan; if it's sacred we walk more gently and are God-guided in what we do to our surroundings". All of which sounds a bit metaphysical for a fairly simple redesign of the gardens at the centre of the square and its adjoining market cross. What was sacred about that?

"We use sacred and special interchangeably," Palmer



Places worth preserving: (clockwise from top) Abbey Road; St Aldean's statue, Lindisfarne; the King's Road, Chelsea, haunt of the celebrity; and the hallowed Kop at Anfield

explains to quell my scepticism. The trouble is that while few would object to the project's three main aims – the protection of historic sites, wildlife conservation and urban regeneration – linking them together in situations which are in some cases rather tenuous is an invitation to all kinds of New Age guffery.

Palmer, who is director of the International Consultancy on Religion, Education and Culture and religious adviser to Prince Philip, has a wide view of what makes a sacred space. "Places can be holy through association; the River Jordan is just a muddy little stream compared with the Tigris, Euphrates or Nile but something special happened there. Places can be hallowed by prayer like Canterbury, which has nothing physically significant but is a place to which people went to pray for centuries. Or they can be inherently sacred like the druidic Silent Pool near Glastonbury, the island of Iona or St Ninian's cave at Whithorn.

He has a point there. Whithorn has plenty of history. It is the site of the oldest monastery in the UK, on the Galloway peninsula where Christianity survived in an ancient form outside the jurisdiction of Roman Britain when that outpost of empire fell to the barbarian hordes. And it is living history. Its archaeologist, Peter Hill, has been only this month piecing together a new theory from a reinterpretation

of fourth-century stone inscriptions which suggest it may have survived as an outpost of Pelagian heretics. There, on a site which has been the focus of pilgrimage for 1,600 years, Sacred Land is developing a Celtic monastic herbarium.

But it is half-an-hour's walk away, on the huge-pebbled foreshore of wide grey sea, that the true enchantment of Whithorn is to be found. At the Western extremity of the beach the eye is inexorably drawn to the black mouth of the cave to which Ninian, the first bishop of the community, retreated for prayer. It stands at the foot of a huge gash in the rust-orange cliffside whose expanse is broken only by the odd tenacious fissures, and from a silence broken only by the hiss of the waves drawing back across the stones and the cries of the kittiwakes that wheel overhead.

By the side of it the plans for Whithorn seem paltry. Andrew Patterson seeks refuge in theology, quoting Martin Luther's line "Where is God not?" This is, after all, a man who when he was a minister once told day-dreamers during one of his sermons that they would be "better in the pub thinking about

the church than to be in the church thinking about the pub".

But if God is to be found everywhere why are people – the agnostic as well as the religious – so drawn to places like Ninian's Cave?

It is a Buddhist nun who supplies the answer. Despite her shaven head and her wine-coloured habit, she introduces herself in a rich Highland burr as Ani Lhamo, though she eventually reveals that her mother, after eight years as a nun, still calls her Edith. Her Tibetan lama, Yeshe Losal, from the Samye Ling Tibetan Buddhist Centre in Dumfries, had been speaking of another Sacred Land project – to build a Buddhist retreat centre on Holy Island, off Arran. He was drawn to the place by a "strong warm feeling" which he said emanated from a hermit, Si Molaise, who had lived there in the 6th century. A place where a great person retrained their mind and became very pure, he explained, retains something of them after they have gone.

"Ultimately everywhere is sacred," added Ani. "It's just

that we are so imperfect that we can't see it. So we needed to find a place like this and each of us will need to find somewhere different."

Such sacred places, says Martin Palmer, are signs that people have been grappling for thousands of years with the religious quest – and they have an added importance for those who live in a secular world which dismisses such notions. "They are places where we encounter something powerful," says Palmer. "Today many people – including many in the Church – are afraid of powerful language. But we surrender our powerful places to New Agers and fancy dress specialists at our risk."

Yet it is precisely to such romantic Aquarian nonsense that a project like Sacred Land is vulnerable. It is not helped by supporters who speak about "vibes and mega-vibes" or like the environmentalist David Bellamy, who talks of the sacred in terms of a "tingle" and says sacred places must have "an aura of peace and tranquillity, a sense of being safe". For the truly sacred must encompass not safety but attraction, dread and exhilaration beyond reason's grasp – what the ancients called the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*.

In the sacred is a sense of the unpredictable and the not-to-be-touched but also a sense of empowerment. It is a place which enables change and sends the affected individual out to affect change elsewhere. It is the opposite of safe. It is precisely the sense of "I am not like this" which seizes the individual awed by the view from a mountain top or even by the power of a work of art. If it is a place where the veil between heaven and earth is particularly thin it is so because it enables us to sense new possibilities, to break step with our mundane realities and envisage something which transcends them.

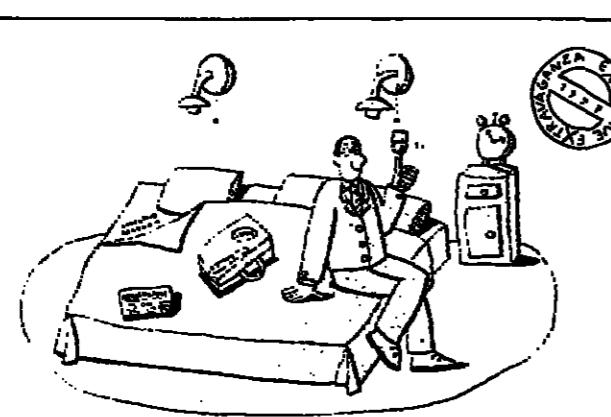
Of course the numinous is subjective. Which is why some will reasonably hold as a sacred spot the clock at Old Trafford which stands, stopped, at the time the club's team perished in the Munich air crash. For those whose youth was encapsulated in the music of Marc Bolan the tree into which his car crashed on Barnes common does that, and the rest of us would not mock.

For others it might be the Kop at Liverpool or the Abbey Road zebra crossing which interrupts the quotidian and opens that window into another world. Perhaps, even, it is just metaphor to speak of the "hallowed wicket" at Lord's in homage of that game which the English, not being a spiritual people, invented in order to give themselves some conception of eternity.

But in Wigtown, by the market cross? Perhaps Andrew Patterson knows something the rest of us don't.

Power beyond word

Andrea Whittam



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## You can rely on 'Radio Times' to get it wrong

We in Britain like to have Aunt Sally. We like to have convenient targets for our contempt. Comedians, especially, like to have convenient targets for contempt. They like to make jokes about mothers-in-law, and Scunthorpe, and British Rail sandwiches, and French Simon Dee...

But everything changes, even Aunt Sallys, though I didn't know this when I was a lad. When I was a lad, you could have predicted that British rail sandwiches would be laughed at for ever. "As limp as a British Rail sandwich." "Is he dead, Inspector?" "He is dead as a British Rail ham sandwich, Sergeant." Phrases like this were thought to be funny enough never to die, and the men who made them could not have predicted that one day two amazing things would happen one, that the sandwiches on railway trains would become very good, and two, that British Rail would cease to exist.

This, in itself, is not enough to stop the British treating British Rail sandwiches as an Aunt Sally. The British love their Aunt Sallys so much that reality has very little impact on them. We still think that French lavatories

are primitive, despite the fact that the superiors which represent the cream of our sanitary sanctuaries are a French import. We still think that Scunthorpe is a byword for dullness, despite *Private Eye*'s valiant effort to replace it with Neasden, and despite the fact that none of us has ever been to Scunthorpe. In the teeth of all the evidence, we still think that mothers-in-law are tyrants, and that Scotsmen are mean, and that trains are stopped by leaves on the line, that phones are plagued by crossed lines, that *The Guardian* is full of misprints.

That was an interesting Aunt Sally, the idea that *The Guardian* led the world in misprints, because it was a quite modern Aunt Sally, and quite localised, limited to middle-class media folk – not the sort of joke you'd hear made much outside London. But the perception that the paper was full of misprints was very widespread in the media milieu, partly because it was funny and because for a while it was true. I can remember a startling example of it in real life.

Philip Hope-Wallace, a *Guardian* columnist, had a plaque unveiled to him in El Vino's wine bar in Fleet Street, above the chau where

misprints, a paper to which we can refer jocularly as a byword for spelling mistakes.

In the absence of any other candidate I would like to nominate the *Radio Times*.

The immediate reason for this personal, in the *RT* recently spelt my name as Miles Kingston.

But this is not an isolated case. Stung by my own misfortune, I have started keeping a sharp eye on the *Radio Times* and have noticed some very odd errors in this once fine organ. Not so long ago they printed the name Harry Carpenter when they clearly meant Humphrey Carpenter. They referred to Reggie Nadelson as "he" when "he" is actually a woman. They brought us a film starring a man called Kevin Kline, though I think they actually meant Kevin Kline. And last week they told us that one of the guests on Radio 4's *The News Quiz* would be Francis Whelan. In fact, it turned out to be Francis Wheen. Wheen was on the programme again this week. But in the *Radio Times* he was listed as Francis Whelan yet again. The old "Grauniad" in its heyday would have been proud of getting the same name wrong two weeks running.

Even BBC announcers are

being misled by the *Radio Times*. The other night there was an edition of *Jazz Notes* on Radio 3 at the usual 10.00pm Saturday time.

which I listened to because I happened to be up late that night, and because it promised a review of recent records by the interesting musician Deirdre Cartwright.

"In a few minutes we'll be getting Deirdre Cartwright's round-up of new records," said the announcer, before playing a short Satie piece to fill the gap.

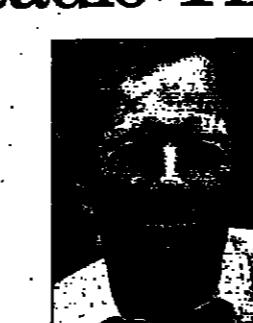
"Well," said presenter Digby Fairweather a few minutes later, "the *Radio Times* billing promised you a visit from Deirdre Cartwright, but we have had to postpone that because we are bringing you a concert from Birmingham."

So the *Radio Times* got it wrong. Fair enough. The *Radio Times* gets things wrong. What was amazing was that the *Radio 3* announcer also got it wrong only two minutes before the programme and had no idea what was coming next.

He must have been reading the *Radio Times*.

A great error.

If you spot any misprints in the *"Radio Times"*, they will find a good home in this column.



Miles Kingston

He often sat. He was flattered but objected mildly to the management that they had spelt his name wrong on the plaque – Phillip instead of Philip.

"Impossible!" said the management. "Why, we even checked the spelling with *The Guardian*!"

The myth was so widespread that *The Guardian* became widely known as the "Grauniad". Whether because of this reputation or not, I do not know, but the paper is now pretty free from misprints and as well proof-read as any paper I know. This may be all right for *The Guardian*, but it is unfair on those of us who need an Aunt Sally for

JOHN LEWIS

the commentators

# A few tips if we take Cook's tour



A racing certainty for Foreign Secretary? Robin Cook with the television horse-racing pundit John McCririck

A reliable guide on the racecourse and pragmatic over Europe, the shadow Foreign Secretary is renowned for always doing his homework, says Donald Macintyre

John McCririck is on the stage of the night club at Livingston football club's stadium outside Edinburgh, smoking a torpedo-size cigar and doing his old friend Robin Cook proud: "I don't know how you do it Robin. It sickens me to my gut. I'm jealous. Just how do you do it?" This is high praise. Racing's most famous television personality isn't talking about Cook's parliamentary skills, or his dissection of the Scott report, or his ability to remain his own man in a party increasingly famous for its internal discipline. He's talking about Cook's talents as a racing tipster, on display each Saturday in Glasgow's *Herald*.

As one of the country's most unlikely celebrity converts to Labour, McCririck has come to the shadow Foreign Secretary's constituency to lend him his support. An old Harrovian of pronounced right-wing views, McCririck has been converted entirely by the affection he has for his fellow racing fanatic. This is odd, since Cook is unmistakably to the left of Tony Blair. McCririck explains over dinner, before the two men appear on a panel to discuss the following day's Scottish Grand National, that he has been particularly cheered by how "you ruled out a single currency in the next parliament". Never mind that Cook didn't quite do that.

At one point, even Cook looks a trifle anxious as McCririck suddenly risks the wrath of some members of his young audience by launching an extravagant denunciation of the Scottish National Party, the main challenger to Labour in Cook's Livingston constituency. "What party with the word 'national' in it has ever done anything for anyone? Look at them: the British National Party, the National Front, the National Socialists... What about the African National Congress?" asks a quick-witted young man. "The jury's still out on them," McCririck shouts back, unfazed.

The following day he will point out, in an interview with Cook on Channel Four's racing programme, that Cook's Grand National tip, *Sister Stephanie*, proved a lemon. She was 4-1 favourite but unseated

her jockey early in the race, losing *The Independent* £10 in the process. But Cook's other tips came home: *Sparky Gayle* in the 2.25 at Ayr, and in the 3.25 – how could he not have punted it? – *Shadow Leader*?

So we now know his interest in horses is taken seriously by the professionals. It started 15 years ago when he, his wife and his two children, surrounded by equestrians at their favourite holiday spot in the New Forest, decided that if you can't beat them, join them. You're as likely to see a picture of Cook on horseback in *Scottish Farmer* as his mugshot in *Tribute*.

And he hopes to keep his racing column after the election.

In Manchester on Friday, having completed a racing TV interview on Labour's European policy, and with a plane to catch, he sat down with his form guide in a BBC office for 20 minutes while Gary Titley, the local MEP, obligingly read out the Ayr run-ups from *Cesfar*. Test Cook, *Shadow Leader*, not the ever, unthinkable in Livingston, of referring to a horse that wasn't running.

Typical. Cook never neglects his homework. It is one reason he rarely makes gaffes. (In a tribute to one he did make – predicting that Labour would win big in breach of the "no complacency" edict – he is now given to announcing himself wickedly

on the telephone to his old sparring partner thus: "Hello Mandelson, Landslide here.") He admits he is a bit of a swot, and can't resist mildly upbraiding a leading member of the Prestwich Jewish community for using an "oxymoron".

Cook clearly enjoys the rich picture of Britain a well-organised election tour gives

explaining all this in an interview with the *Buyer's Times*.

So how Euro-sceptic is the Shadow Cabinet's leading Euro-sceptic? His reservations – almost entirely on economic grounds – about the single currency, and its potentially deflationary implications, are deep and continuing. But on the European

Photograph: Sporting Life

There is one further point. Last summer Cook pointed out at Chatham House that eight of the 15 EU states had governments led by sister social democratic parties. Far from joining Jacques Chirac and Helmut Kohl in a *ménage à trois*, a Labour government might prefer to put itself, as the EU's third big power, at the head of countries anxious to curb the dominance of the Franco-German axis. At the time that seemed a heresy. More recently Blair has been suggesting that his government might after all be an effective counterweight to Bonn. There is certainly no doubt that Blair thinks him.

But abroad is for later. This is an election, and Cook is clearly a believer in the great Irish-American Tip O'Neill's famous dictum that "all politics is local". Given that he has a majority of 8,448, he takes remarkably good care of his constituency. This allegedly inchoate man is gregariously at home here in a way he clearly isn't in the Commons tea room. In Broxburn – a ward which used to be in the old West Lothian constituency, represented by Tam Dalyell – Cook tells a story of which Tip O'Neill would have approved. One day the chairman of the Broxburn branch came down to Westminster for the first time and Dalyell introduced him to the then elderly Mammy Shimwell, who

had held the seat in the early 1930s. Instead of reminiscing amiably with the local man, Shimwell rounded on him irascibly for his loss of the seat. "It was the Broxburn boxes which let me down in '35," the old man complained. "If Broxburn had voted for me, I would have been the MP. And if I'd been the MP, I would have become leader of the party instead of Attlee."

Is working-class support holding up in the Scottish heartland? One Labour councillor, out of Cook's earshot, says some people do say on the doorstep: "We'll vote for Robin Cook right enough but..." But what? That they're not so keen on Blair? "I didn't say that, you did," he replies. Cook himself dismisses the idea that traditional Labour supporters will defect to the SNP because the party is too right wing. They want the Tories out too much. Livingston provides a vivid sense of the two elections taking place: the Westminster, Europe-obsessed campaign, and the bread-and-butter one which is being waged on the doorsteps. Cook has even been told by one councillor that his national profile was helpful when he was the health spokesman in 1992 but that "it doesn't make so much difference now you have been sidelined to doing Europe".

Side-lined, he isn't. But how will Cook function in a Blair cabinet? He won't say so, but he is certainly conscious that his left-wing credentials are as useful to Blair as they are to him. Conversely, if there was a revolt by intellectuals and peasants against a Blair government that had failed to fulfil its promise, it isn't difficult to imagine Cook at his head. Whatever Cook really thinks about his old opponent, Gordon Brown's ultra-austere spending totals, he's a canny, grown-up politician. He is conscious of how in 1974 Labour spent first – and paid later. Cook at least shares Brown's belief that this is the wrong way round.

He still refuses, having been converted away from anti-devolutionism by the outcome of the 1983 election, to rule out the possibility of forsaking Westminster in the future and going to Edinburgh as a member of the Scottish parliament. He himself says it would be "presumptuous" to think he would be Scotland's prime minister if he did. He agrees that until he took his present job three years ago he wasn't a foreign affairs specialist. But no one would say since then – an authentic Cookism, this – "that I haven't applied myself to it".

The Foreign Office would give him,

because of the central importance of Europe to domestic policy, an important entree across the board of Cabinet policy-making. Sir John Coles, the Permanent Secretary, recently told him he had never known as crowded an international agenda as the UK faced over the next 18 months: the IGC in Amsterdam, the British EU and G7 presidencies, Hong Kong, EMU.

As Cook puts it: "It would be rather odd to be offered the world and say you'll have to go away and think about it."

He is baffled that anyone should think he would be a pushover among fellow foreign ministers

## Powerful beyond words

Andreas Whittam Smith

From Vietnam to Bosnia, Rwanda to China, it is the photojournalist who preserves the decisive moments of history

The study by two photographers, Tom Stoddart and Alastair Thain, of Sarajevo under siege provides the most effective exhibition of photojournalism I have ever seen. It can be found at the Royal Festival Hall, London, under the title *Edge of Madness*.

The phrase is taken from General Ratko Mladić's exhortation to the Serbian forces looking down on the city from the surrounding hills: "Shoot at slow intervals until I order you to stop. Shell them until they can't sleep, don't stop until they are on the edge of madness."

At the show we do not actually see exploding shells and bloodshed, though they were ever-present during Sarajevo's 1,000-day ordeal.

Instead, the photographers have covered daily life during the siege. How people had to dodge bullets as they hunted for water, food and fuel; and even as they buried their dead. How Sarajevo's citizens kept going when their homes were shattered or they were disabled by war wounds.



The first draft of history: this picture of children running from a napalm attack on their village shocked the world and symbolised the horror of the Vietnam war

Photograph: Nick Ut/AP

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# business & city

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BUSINESS &amp; CITY EDITOR: JEREMY WARNER

## Prospect of G7 intervention sends dollar into reverse

Diane Coyle

Economics Editor

The currency markets went into reverse yesterday, sending the dollar lower and the German mark higher. The triggers were the possibility of official intervention to halt the dollar's two-year rise following next weekend's meeting of Group of Seven (G7) ministers, and the political uncertainty resulting from the prospect of early French elections.

Recent currency swings will be on the agenda at the G7 meeting due in Washington this weekend as both German and Japanese officials have indicated that they think the US currency has climbed far enough.

The German currency was

also boosted by the news of early French elections. President Chirac's decision was interpreted as an admission that additional austerity measures will be needed if the government budget deficit is to be reduced by enough to meet the Maastricht target.

"We are interested in the mark remaining a strong currency," Hans Tietmeyer, Bundesbank President, said at the weekend. Yesterday Eisuke Sakakibara of Japan's Finance Ministry added his weight by warning that it would be dangerous to assume Japan would not raise interest rates to defend the yen.

The dollar was likely to remain weak ahead of the G7 meeting on Saturday, analysts said.

The German currency was

reassessments of the likelihood of European monetary union going ahead on time. Every time the probability seems to recede a little, the mark gets a boost against other European currencies.

The result of all these factors has been one of the market's periodic reassessments of the likelihood of European monetary union going ahead on time. Every time the probability seems to recede a little, the mark gets a boost against other European currencies.

"Politics is creeping back in and this has turned around sentiment," said Michael Lewis

at Deutsche Morgan Grenfell.

The last effective G7 intervention to turn around currency trends came two years ago. At their meeting in April 1995, ministers agreed to halve the dollar's slide, and it subsequently climbed back from its post-war lows of 1.79.75 and DM1.3695.

It has gained more than 50 per cent against the yen and more than 25 per cent against the mark during the past two years.

"It is not clear that the Japanese should be unhappy about this because it has helped their exporters, but they want to be seen to be saying the right thing. It's a game of trade politics," said Nigel Richardson, an analyst at the Japanese bank Yamaichi.

Although Japan's trade surplus fell in March, the politically sensitive bilateral surplus with the US rose by 11.2 per cent to ¥379.33bn, the sixth monthly increase in a row.

Even so, the fact that the markets think that the dollar's current exchange rate against the yen is probably about right suggests that a G7 statement will not have a dramatic effect — any more than February's statement that the dollar's earlier misalignment had been corrected.

The dollar dipped from ¥125.85 to as low as ¥125.15 and from DM1.7113 to DM1.7020 in London yesterday. The pound fell nearly a picicng to DM2.7831.

Andrew Regan and colleague pictured secretly meeting Co-op executive in a Buckinghamshire hotel car park

## Co-op threatens to call in SFO over offshore payment

Nigel Cope

City Correspondent

The Co-op turned up the heat on Andrew Regan's Lanica Trust yesterday when it threatened to call in the Serious Fraud Office unless it received answers to several questions relating to a £2m payment to a Cayman Islands company.

The threat comes as Mr Regan prepares to deliver sensitive Co-op documents to the High Court today as he attempts to launch his £1.2bn bid for the whole society including the Co-op bank, the funeral parlours and the supermarkets.

In a letter sent to Mr Regan by Graham Melmoth, the CWS chief executive, Mr Melmoth casts doubt on Lanica's explanation that a £2m payment to Ronald Zimet of Trelis International in 1995 was made for assistance in negotiating an extension of a deal between the CWS and Hobson, a food company controlled by Mr Regan.

It says both Allan Green and David Chambers, the two suspended CWS managers responsible for the deal, have said they knew nothing about Trelis or Mr Zimet. They have told the CWS that negotiations between the two companies had been conducted directly with Mr Regan with no use of a middle man.

The letter states: "If the 'Trelis role' was fully disclosed at the time, presumably you will have no difficulty in telling me what [Mr Zimet's] role was, why you were prepared to pay in excess of £2m for it and who the Co-op was told about it."

It closes: "These are simple and straightforward questions which call for simple answers." — CWS

mer financial adviser, cast further doubt on the validity of the payment yesterday. It issued a statement saying: "Contrary to recent press reports, SBC Warburg confirmed today that Swiss Bank Corporation did not clear a payment made to Trelis International by Hobson plc in January 1995."

SBC said it was informed of the extension to the supply agreement in January 1995 "but not of the payment to Trelis". The bank said it was not informed about the payment until March of that year. It said it remained as financial adviser to Hobson "shortly thereafter."

The Warburg statement contradicts a version made by the

These are simple and straightforward questions which call for simple answers. — CWS

Regan camp at the weekend when it claimed Warburg's had been aware of the payment and approved it. The bank said yesterday that it resigned shortly after learning about the payment.

Separately KPMG, the accountancy firm that was Hobson's auditors said it only signed off the company's accounts following assurances from both Mr Regan and his fellow director David Lyons, that everything was in order. It said that if that assurance had not been forthcoming it would have had to hand back the accounts.

The issue is complicated by the fact that some of the advisers who were working with Mr Regan at the time of the Hobson deal are now representing

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Andrew Regan (top picture, right) and David Lyons, his right-hand man, shown on Sunday 13 April standing by Allan Green's Co-op registered Jaguar. Middle picture: Mr Lyons joins the Co-op's controller of retail operations and Mr Regan in the car, parked by the Bellhouse Hotel, Beaconsfield. Bottom: Mr Lyons about to depart 55 minutes later in his Porsche

## Group denies it bugged Regan

Control Risks, the security and surveillance group hired by the Co-op to help fend off the attentions of Andrew Regan, has denied that it bugged telephones in Mr Regan's home or attached monitoring devices to his wife's car, writes Nigel Cope.

"That is not the kind of thing we do," a spokesman said. "We would not undertake surveillance exercises ourselves, we would use some one else. But we did not hire anyone for this purpose either." The company said that if there was a bugging

operation, it would like to know who was responsible.

It is already known that the Co-operative Wholesale Society hired Control Risks for week with the arrangement ending last Friday. The work included filming Allan Green, the CWS former controller of retailing, handing documents to Andrew Regan in a Beaconsfield car park.

Founded in 1975 by four former SAS officers, Control Risks is one of the best known organisations in its field. It was

originally established to mediate in kidnappings and extortion and it still handles around 30 abduction cases per month. But its work has become more diverse recently and has included handling the security arrangements of the female tennis champions.

Another key area of work is assisting companies that are operating or looking to operate in potentially difficult markets such as Russia. Control Risks has said that, during the Cold

War, companies used to pull out of Russia if there was a mafia connection. However, some organisations now feel that they cannot function properly without such a connection.

With a staff of 2,000 drawn

from military, diplomatic,

and accountancy backgrounds,

the Control Risks

team has included two former

Metropolitan Police Commiss

ioners. It has offices in 10

countries and claims to have

more than 3,400

clients in 120 countries.

Analysts said it was just one

part of a series of recent positive announcements from GrandMet.

"The market likes the continuing good news on the

spirits front," said Geoff Collyer of NatWest Markets. "For the last five years all we have seen

is downgrades in the spirits

market, but that seems to have

come to an end. A lot of people

are expecting GrandMet's

results in a few weeks' time to

justify that impression."

Another analyst, who de-

cided to be named, said: "Sen-

timent has been relatively

positive and it is really just fol-

low-through from that."

Shares in the Smirnoff vodka

to Burger King group rose

at one point to 509.5p — their

highest since June 1992. At

yesterday's high the stock was

some 19 per cent above its low

of the year of 429p set

on 15 January.

Last week Merrill Lynch re-

peated a "buy" recommendation on the stock, noting a

longer-term chart objective of

650p, while other brokers have

recently said that they favoured

GrandMet over Allied Domecq.

In the 1990s the spirits divi-

sion has reported growth of

profits, volumes and invest-

ment in advertising faster than

the competition. This is likely

to enable GrandMet to out-

perform rivals over the next

three years, analysts say.

Burger King, Pillsbury baked

foods and IDV are outper-

forming their rivals, which has

prompted a clutch of "buy"

notes in past weeks.

Investment column, page 22

"Frankly we do not see it that way. Both are robust companies

and are perfectly capable of stand-

ing on their own." But he ad-

mitted pre-emption rights over

Zenith had not been decided.

Lorne Tullian, media analy-

st, said: "Zenith and Control Risks

are both well-established

businesses with a good track

record.

Another analyst, who de-

cided to be named, said: "Sen-

timent has been relatively

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Investment column, page 22

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## COMMENT

You would be hard-pressed to find anyone willing to support another bout of empire-building in the industry. Advertising may be one of those businesses where to be small is to be beautiful'

GrandM  
disposal  
cooks up  
charge of £39m

Letter: Wallrock

## Go-it alone Cordiant rediscovers an old truth

How Lord Saatchi must be smiling to himself – that is if he has time to in between trips to Conservative Party Central Office, where he is advising the Prime Minister on election strategy and advertising. With its merger announcement yesterday, Cordiant, Maurice Saatchi's former company, has all but run up the white flag, in effect admitting that it is unequal to the task of regrouping and reinventing itself after the traumas of the last five years.

This is strongly denied by the present Cordiant chairman, Charlie Scott, who rightly points out that the group is achieving the targets it set itself at the time of its 1995 rights issue. None the less, it is hard to avoid the comparison with WPP, which after a period of vaulting ambition and hubris not dissimilar to that of the former Saatchi & Saatchi suffered the same near-nemesis. Unlike Lord Saatchi, however, its creator and guiding light, Martin Sorrell, managed to survive, if only by the skin of his teeth, and he has restored the advertising giant to rude health.

The same cannot be said of Cordiant, which has struggled to stay afloat since Lord Saatchi deserted ship, taking some of the company's best talents with him. Now it seems to be throwing in the towel altogether, the attempt to find a cohesive approach and culture in effect abandoned for good.

Lord Saatchi may be able to take some satisfaction in what has happened, but there should in fact be no shame or criticism attached to what Cordiant is doing. This is

the company's way of unburdening itself of its past, of finally drawing a line in the sand and putting its businesses on the right foot for the future.

Demergers most often take place in companies with starkly different businesses. It is unusual to see a company all of whose interests are in the same business splitting itself in two. But advertising is different, a people business made up of big egos and volatile temperaments encompassing a wide number of successful formulas, most of which don't mix terribly well.

In fact there are few advertising businesses organised as holding companies that manage to achieve a unified approach and culture. Certainly there is little value the holding company structure can add to the work its agencies are already doing on behalf of clients. In any case, Saatchi & Saatchi, Bates and Zenith always were very different sorts of company and they never lived happily together. Bates has found the association with Saatchi's positively restrictive, raising conflicts of interest that prevent it competing for an estimated 10 per cent of the world advertising market.

There is every reason to believe both Bates and Saatchi's will function better alone than together. But those who think it will also make them obvious takeover targets have perhaps forgotten the lessons of the late 1980s and early 1990s. The City may have forgiven Martin Sorrell for the spectacular loss of shareholder value he oversaw

in that period, but you'd be hard-pressed to find anyone willing to support another bout of empire-building in the advertising industry as we approach the millennium. Advertising may be one of those businesses where to be small is to be beautiful.

### Niceties butter no parsnips in forex

If exchange rates never misbehaved, what would the G7 ministers have left to argue about? Likewise, if the pound didn't interrupt its long-run decline with an appreciation from time to time, what would British exporters be able to blame for their mediocre performance?

The difficulty with exchange rates is that they never please all of the people all of the time. Whenever they move too far in one direction or another somebody is bound to kick up a fuss. There are three separate areas of fuss in the currency markets at the moment, but the paradox is that exchange rates are not far away from what economists would consider to be their equilibrium values. There are no serious mis-alignments.

Take the dollar versus the yen. The US currency has gained more than 50 per cent in value since hitting its post-war low in April 1995. The G7 meeting two years ago marked a successful turning point. Both the Japanese and Americans are indicating that they think the movement has gone far enough.

The US means it; if the dollar climbs even higher, American manufacturers will feel the pinch. It is perhaps surprising that they have not yet started to whine in any serious way. The US trade deficit – and especially the bilateral deficit with Japan – is uncomfortable big. It would be alarming if the strong dollar started to undermine exports.

The Japanese probably do not mean it. Yasuo Matsushita, Governor of the Bank of Japan, made it clear in a speech at the end of last week that the authorities are depending on rapid export gains to sustain the virtuous circle of growth in the limping Japanese economy. Interest rates can't go any lower. The government has to start correcting its huge budget deficit, so taxes are due to rise. A weaker yen is the only weapon left in Japan's armoury.

Japan still feels compelled to make the right noises about halting the yen's fall. But political niceties will butter no parsnips in the foreign exchange markets. Investors will look at the relative strengths of the two economies – the contrast could hardly be greater – and at interest rate prospects. If the authorities tried intervention in these circumstances it would flop. The market is right on this front.

A second aspect of currency tensions is the outlook for EMU. The investing herd has a simple rule of thumb here. Whenever the single currency looks less probable, buy German marks, and vice versa. As the political heat builds up during the next year, there will

be several waves of sentiment back and forth.

Beneath these waves, most of the currencies within the exchange rate mechanism will remain as stable as they have for the past five years. The exception, the lira, will be vulnerable to bigger movements unless Italy delivers economic reforms and budget proposals the market finds genuinely credible.

That leaves sterling. There are two contradictory views about the pound's recent advance. You can either believe that it represents a fundamental improvement in the British economy – an improvement based partly on the performance of all those exporters now complaining the loudest about the strong pound.

Or you can opt for the view that it is a temporary gain linked to the dollar and the present mini-boom. On balance the latter case seems more probable. So if you are taking your holiday abroad this summer, this perhaps the time to be buying your currency.

### Some don't like it hot

It's a bit rich of Andrew Regan to complain about the surveillance operation mounted by the CWS against him and his family. This is the man who has prevailed upon senior CWS executives to act in a grossly disloyal way to their organisation. If he can't stand the heat, he should never have entered the kitchen.

## Sellers lose out as Alliance shares climb

Clifford German

The 640,000 investors who chose to sell their shares in Alliance & Leicester last week lost out yesterday, with the price climbing to 571.5p at one stage during the company's debut on the stock market. Some 27 per cent of the 2.3 million people who received free

Auction of A&L shares		
Price	No of shares	No of bidders
548	730,000	1
538	755,000	2
532	500,000	1
531	3,000,000	2
530	5,000	1
527	1,000,000	1
526	2,015,000	3
522	20,220,000	4
521	6,140,800	4
520	7,455,000	10
519	255,000	1
518	4,150,000	1
517	6,138,660	1

Average bid price: 522.68p; Total shares bid for: 52,361,667; Number of bidders: 36

shares decided to sell through an auction conducted by Cazenove.

The shares in the reconstituted bank eventually closed at 566.5p yesterday, valuing the 250 free shares received by all of the former building society's members at £1.416.

The closing price values the bank at £3.3m. The £1.416 windfall for the 1.5 million in-



Going up: The share price suggests that Richard Pym, A&L managing director, might face a bid. Photograph: Kalpesh Lathigra

er again this morning, some dealers said it could trigger a surge in demand from institutions who will eventually need to hold up to half the total issue after it becomes a constituent of the FTSE 100 share index.

The relatively low turnover yesterday excluding the shares auctioned last Friday suggests that the institutions were prepared to wait and see whether the shares could be bought cheaper. But if prices start high-

er again this morning, some dealers said it could trigger a surge in demand from institutions who will eventually need to hold up to half the total issue after it becomes a constituent of the FTSE 100 share index.

The surge in the share price yesterday took most of the City institutions by surprise, and opinion is now divided whether it is sustainable. Last night's

price values the shares at 13.9 times historic earnings and implies a yield of 3.6 per cent gross on the nominal dividend the directors would have paid for last year. On the same basis its nearest rival, Abbey National, is trading at 14.4 times earnings and yields 4 per cent gross.

But John Leonard, managing

analyst at Salomon brothers claimed the proper price based on fundamentals should be 480p-500p and the market price implied a strong expectation of a bid for the new bank or an early move to return surplus capital to shareholders.

If the market price is maintained it may have widespread implications for the value of shares in the Halifax, Woolwich and Northern Rock building societies and for Norwich

Union, all of which are converting to public companies in the next three months. If larger numbers of shareholders now decide to hold on to their shares in these conversions in anticipation of a bigger profit by waiting, it could force institutions to bid prices up to secure the shares they need to comply with their investment rules.

Market report, page 23

### IN BRIEF

#### Record £250,000 fine for City Equities

City Equities, the London-based share dealer, has been fined a record £250,000 by Fimbra, the investment watchdog, for misinforming clients on the risks of trading in so-called "penny shares". The firm was also ordered to pay the £30,906 costs of the Fimbra inquiry. City Equities admitted charges that it did not explain the risks of investing in penny shares, that it made unsolicited calls to try to conclude deals over the phone and that it failed to establish whether its recommendations suited clients. Fimbra also found that City Equities failed to keep proper records or maintain staff supervision procedures.

#### Traffic dips at East Midlands Airport

Passenger numbers at East Midlands Airport, owned by National Express, fell by 281,000 in the first quarter of 1997, a drop of 4.7 per cent on the same period last year. The period is EMA's least busy quarter and the passenger numbers were the second highest in the first quarter in EMA's history. The company said the figures reflected a national picture of reduced charter and inclusive travel: in summer 1996 and the 1996/97 winter programmes. The outlook for 1997 as a whole was more encouraging.

#### Industry's £12bn sickness bill

Sickness absence cost industry £12bn last year following the loss of 187 million working days, a Confederation of Industry survey showed. The survey of almost 700 companies found there was an average cost of £533 for every worker off sick. Workers took an average of 8.4 days off sick last year, half a day more than in 1994 when the last survey was conducted by the CBI. The cost of sickness has jumped from £10bn in 1994 following a rise in the number of days taken off by non-manual workers from 6.1 to 7.9. Absence rates among manual employees have remained at 9.7 days a year, with part-timers taking off eight days a year. Most of the time off was because of illness, although another significant reason was family responsibilities.

#### Premier Farnell under pressure

The continued strength of sterling knocked around £6m off annual profits at Premier Farnell, the world's biggest catalogue distributor of electronic bits and pieces. Howard Poulson, chief executive, said: "In terms of translation, one cent is equivalent to \$1m of profits." However, he said that the biggest impact on last year's profits, which failed to meet expectations with a rise from an underlying £10.8m to £13.7m before tax, came from weak conditions in the volume distribution market.

Investment Column, page 22

Sainsbury bank off to flying start

Chris Hughes

Sainsbury's fledgling bank is attracting more than 10,000 customers a week which, the company said, was ahead of expectations. Analysts were less surprised and said Sainsbury might find it hard to maintain the momentum.

"It's a very promising start, but it's only a start," said Simon Samuels, banking analyst at Dresdner Kleinwort Benson. "Sainsbury has been picking the low-hanging fruit straight way. But I suspect it was pleasantly surprised by the take-up, as Tesco and Prudential have also entered the market for depositors."

Sainsbury's Bank, 55 per cent-owned by Sainsbury and 45 per cent by the Bank of Scotland, attracted more than 100,000 customers who have deposited £100m since it opened eight weeks ago. Its 10,000 new customers a week compares with 12,000 a month for First Direct, traditionally the fastest-growing bank in the UK. Tesco's bank attracted 190,000 customers in its first eight months.

Sainsbury's offers two accounts and two credit cards. Its Instant Access Savings account, which offers 5.75 per cent interest on balances over £1, has been the most popular product.

Sainsbury has benefited from a receptive customer base and a market-leading interest rate, Mr Samuels said. "It's a stonking rate of interest. But it's not clear whether Sainsbury can maintain it across an entire product range."

## Leap in price of houses biggest in 20 years

Diane Coyle  
Economics Editor

House prices are at their most buoyant for two decades, according to a new survey. The impending general election had not dented the housing market, the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors said yesterday.

Its regular survey of estate agents showed more than a tenth reporting that house prices have climbed by more than 5 per cent in the past three months – the only time apart from 1988 that the response has been this strong in the 20 years since the survey began.

The housing recovery would continue, the institute predicted, thanks to the tax cuts and windfalls of free building society shares. Ian Perry, a spokesman, said: "Combined with a marked rise in the number of valuations being carried out, this means we can look for

more property coming on to the market."

However, the recovery has been uneven. London, the south-East and West Midlands account for the upbeat results. A net balance of 90 per cent of the respondents in London said they had seen prices increase, followed by 87 per cent in the South-East.

At the other extreme, the survey observed. Apart from anything else, the number of transactions is running at an annual rate of about 1.3 million against 2.2 million in 1988.

Even so, Mr Perry said, "The housing market seems to be immune to the election." Predictions of an increase in interest rates in May end of the possi-

bility phasing out of tax relief on mortgage interest had not had any appreciable effect.

House prices remain the clearest signal of the strength of the housing market. Other recent figures have pointed to a cooling off in the pace of activity in the past two or three months.

For example, banks and building societies reported a slight decline in new mortgage lending last month. The number of loans approved by building societies returned to the same level as a year ago after picking up sharply last autumn.

The mixed signals mean economists are divided in their views about the underlying health of the housing market. Simon Briscoe of investment bank Nikko predicts there will be no boom "this side of the millennium". Others say that, although talk of boom is exaggerated, house price rises this year could be in double digits.

However, the Department of Trade and Industry cleared a potential takeover to buy Littlewoods, subject to the result of a fresh investigation by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission (MMC).

An exclusivity clause giving Littlewoods sole rights to negotiate a purchase is understood to run out tomorrow, the day before Sears Executive board, led by embattled chief executive Liam Strong, meets to decide on

## National Provident Institution Notice of Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given that the 161st Annual General Meeting of Members of National Provident Institution will be held at the City Conference Centre, 76 Mark Lane, London EC3R 7JN, on Wednesday, 21 May 1997, at 12.00 noon, for the transaction of the following ordinary business:

- Resolution No.1 To receive and adopt the Accounts and Report of the Directors for the year ended 31 December 1996;
- Resolution No.2 To re-appoint as a Director, Mr K Jones, who has joined the Board since the last Annual General Meeting;
- Resolution No.3 To re-appoint as a Director, Mr A D Lyons, who has joined the Board since the last Annual General Meeting;
- Resolution No.4 To re-appoint as a Director, Mr P W L Morgan, who is retiring by rotation;
- Resolution No.5 To re-appoint as a Director, Mr B J Brindley, who is retiring by rotation;
- Resolution No.6 To re-appoint as a Director, Lord Camoys, who is retiring by rotation;
- Resolution No.7 To re-appoint as a Director, Mr K H McBrien, who is retiring by rotation; (*Mr Morgan and Lord Camoys are members of the Remuneration Committee*)
- Resolution No.8 To re-appoint Coopers & Lybrand as Auditors and to authorise the Directors to determine their remuneration.

BY ORDER OF THE BOARD: Steven O'Brien, Company Secretary.

Principal Office: National Provident House, 55 Calverley Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN1 2UE.

NOTE: A Member entitled to attend and vote at the general meeting is entitled to appoint a proxy to attend

# Telefonica moves to cut AT&T link

Chris Godsmark  
Business Correspondent

Telefonica, Spain's main phone company, yesterday moved closer to severing its alliance with AT&T of the US after British Telecom's landmark deal last week to poach the carrier into a partnership with MCI, its American partner.

Juan Villalonga, Telefonica's chairman, confirmed that the company was likely to leave Unisource, the four-way alliance of European carriers in which it had a 25 per cent stake. Unisource also has an alliance with AT&T, which competes for large European business customers with BT and MCI's offering, Concert Communications Services.

BT's deal to prise Telefonica out of Unisource has been regarded as a huge coup for the UK giant's international strategy. Telefonica is the world's ninth-largest carrier with by far the largest network of interests in the rapidly expanding Latin American phone market. It has controlling stakes in phone networks in Chile, Peru and Argentina. Under the deal BT will buy 2 per cent of Telefonica shares later this year for about £280m, while Telefonica will buy 1 per cent of BT. The arrangement needs approval from the European Commission.

Mr Villalonga insisted the withdrawal from Unisource would be orderly. "We will start negotiations and since we have a good relationship there will be a deal soon." Facing criticism in the Spanish press that the latest deal brought Telefonica under the control of BT and MCI, he added: "This alliance is an opportunity and not a threat."



Humming lines: Juan Villalonga, Telefonica's chairman, insists that the alliance is an opportunity, not a threat

The discussions will now centre on financial penalties Telefonica could have to pay to leave Unisource. One issue is whether the Spanish carrier would have to buy back the data transmission network it injected into the Unisource alliance on joining.

Mr Villalonga said he would "recover" the network, which Unisource uses to distribute its communications services and which is said to be worth up to £300m. However Unisource made clear it does not intend to give the asset away free.

Separately, Unisource sought to limit the damage to its am-

bitions, insisting that the grouping was "well and thriving" even without the involvement of Telefonica.

The remaining shareholders are PTT of the Netherlands, Swiss Telecom and Telia of Sweden.

AT&T yesterday revealed a further drop in profits, which have been under mounting pressure due to stiff competition in the US long-distance phone market from rivals MCI and Sprint. Profits between January and March slid 17 per cent to \$1.13bn (£706m), though turnover grew to \$13.05bn.

To be fair, there were no more nasty surprises in the latest figures and management appears to have kept its eye on the old Farnell business during the dissection of the Premier integration. Profits there grew from \$45.0m to \$50.5m, reflecting organic growth of close to 9 per cent. The slight margin drop to a still healthy 24.3 per cent represents investment in the new industrial catalogue, a new departure for the group into parts and tools for wider industrial use.

More difficult to judge is the state of the old Premier operation. Certainly the \$39.3m contribution for 42 weeks with the group and operating margins of under 21 per cent look a poor return on the group's investment. Year-on-year profits are said to be up 7 per cent, but mainly because of the £6m annualised cost savings squeezed out following the takeover.

However, it is early days yet to judge the benefits of merging Farnell's higher-margin catalogue with Newark, Premier's wider-ranging catalogue offering. A new US edition of the Farnell catalogue, now rolled out to around a third of Newark's customers, is showing promising early results, with annual sales running at \$15m so far. The plan is eventually to take Newark to continental Europe.

But Mr Pouson still has his work cut out. The reduction in net debt received a one-off boost from the sale of FES and the sub-5 per cent market growth

## Investment by venture capital rises to £3.2bn

Roger Trapp

A 54 per cent rise in funding for start-ups and other early-stage businesses helped British venture capital investment rise by nearly a third to a record £3.3bn in 1996.

The figures published by the British Venture Capital Association (BVCA) yesterday show that a total of £131m was put into young companies, the highest amount since 1990. The number of financings for a sector generally regarded as being starved of cash also rose, for the third year running, to 225.

Overall, investment in the UK increased by 31 per cent, to £2.8bn, or 87 per cent of the total put up by full members of the BVCA, which represents vir-

tually every significant source of venture capital in the country.

New opportunities accounted for 85 per cent of the total invested, with follow-on financings to companies that had previously received venture-capital backing accounting for the rest.

Funds for working capital, new plant, acquisitions and other forms of expansion continued to be the largest investment category, with 593 financings or 49 per cent of the total.

Investment in management buyouts and buy-ins also remained strong, rising 33 per cent to a record £2.1bn and accounting for 74 per cent of the total invested. However, while the number of MBOs reached a record 127, the proportion of MBO and MBI financings was

UK-based investors. However, those in the United States are becoming increasingly important and contributed a record £8.22bn, 3.5 times the 1995 figure.

### IN BRIEF

• JBA Holdings, the computer software group, is close to making an acquisition in France. The deal may be finalised by tomorrow, and could enlarge the group's 1,800-strong workforce by another 300, according to Alan Vickery, chairman, who yesterday announced a rise in pre-tax profits for last year from £7.24m to £11.26m. On trading prospects, the chairman cited problems posed by uncertainty over how computer systems will cope with the advent of the millennium. "The year 2000 problem is a great supporter of revenue. I don't envisage any software house to go short of work during this period. Meanwhile, the outlook for 1997 is 'steady as we go', keeping revenues up at around 30 per cent." Earnings per share last year climbed 39 per cent to 18.26p, while the dividend total was raised from 4p to 5.1p through a 4p final payment.

• Siebe has sold its RFI Shielding subsidiary to Cirqual for £9m. RFI makes electronic shielding and became a part of the Siebe group when it acquired Unitech a year ago. Cirqual, which said it expected the acquisition to be immediately earnings-enhancing, also announced the £5.74m acquisition of Thomas Wild Forgings, a metal forging and casting business.

• Worldwide Leisure Group is planning to join the Oxfam market through a placing to raise up to £300,000 for working capital. The issue price will be 20p a share and the expected market capitalisation of the group will be £1.54m. The company sells themed rides such as Rodeo Bull, Surf Machine and Ski Machine. In the 13 months to 30 June 1996, the unaudited accounts for Worldwide Leisure show turnover of £208.556.

• Securicor Telesciences plans to sell 2.6 million shares in an initial public offering (IPO) in the US. It is anticipated that the IPO will raise in excess of \$30m (£18.42m), with Securicor retaining around 57 per cent of Securicor Telesciences' common stock. The company said around \$20m would be paid to Securicor by way of repayment of working capital loans and a dividend, while the balance will be available to Securicor Telesciences for product development. Securicor Telesciences made profits of \$3.6m from \$34m of sales in the year ended 30 September 1996.

• London & Associated Properties announced a rise in annual taxable profits from £1.73m to £1.76m. Earnings per share rose from 1.87p to 2.39p. A final dividend of 7.3p was declared.

### Company Results

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividends
Match Mining (F)	3.34m (1.90m)	0.10m (0.11m)	1.35p (1.51p)	0.01p (0.51p)
London & Associated Prop. (F)	(1)	1.70m (1.70m)	2.25p (1.87p)	0.78p (0.72p)
Holdings (F)	182m (123m)	11.3m (7.24m)	18.26p (13.14p)	4p (4p)
Alstom Group (F)	19.0m (14.6m)	1.23m (0.82m)	0.47p (0.31p)	15p (1)
Fax (F)	10.2m (11.8m)	0.51m (2.44m)	0.1p (-12.4p)	n/a
Premier Farnell (F)	953m (506m)	17.2m (11.0m)	38.5p (54.8p)	12p (10.25p)
Read Executive (F)	19.1m (15.0m)	12.3m (8.02m)	2.6p (2p)	2.6p (2p)
United Energy (F)	5.33m (4.12m)	0.70m (0.11m)	2p (0.36p)	n/p (1)
Waste Management (OII)	27.0m (26.0m)	33.9m (35.5m)	4.5p (5.7p)	n/p (1)
(F) - Final (O) - Interim (I) - 11 months; comparatives 12 months				

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# A high price for Premier Farnell

## THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY MAGNUS GRIMOND

Premier Farnell, now the world's biggest catalogue distributor of electronic bits and pieces, provides a classic case study of the pitfalls of paying over the odds for a big acquisition in another country at the top of the cycle. The £1.9bn takeover of US rival Premier was being criticised on all those grounds almost as soon as it was announced early last year. Since then the group has seen a drop-off in the market for semiconductors, beaten by adverse exchange rates and rounded off its litany of woes in January this year with a hammered-up profits warning.

In themselves, none of these is that serious, but together they add up to a substantial shortfall on expectations at the time of the Premier deal. Stripping out the £43.3m gain on the sale of Farnell Electronic Services and £7.7m of Premier rationalisation costs, the combined underlying business saw its profits rise from £11.1m to £13.7m, some £23m below the original forecast.

The shares have slumped from a high of nearly 750p reached at the end of December to 500p, below last year's 540p rights price. Even after yesterday's 1p upturn, it is clear that Howard Pouson, the chief executive, and his team have a wall of credibility to climb.

To be fair, there were no more nasty surprises in the latest figures and management appears to have kept its eye on the old Farnell business during the dissection of the Premier integration. Profits there grew from \$45.0m to \$50.5m, reflecting organic growth of close to 9 per cent. The slight margin drop to a still healthy 24.3 per cent represents investment in the new industrial catalogue, a new departure for the group into parts and tools for wider industrial use.

More difficult to judge is the state of the old Premier operation. Certainly the £39.3m contribution for 42 weeks with the group and operating margins of under 21 per cent look a poor return on the group's investment. Year-on-year profits are said to be up 7 per cent, but mainly because of the £6m annualised cost savings squeezed out following the takeover.

However, it is early days yet to judge the benefits of merging Farnell's higher-margin catalogue with Newark, Premier's wider-ranging catalogue offering. A new US edition of the Farnell catalogue, now rolled out to around a third of Newark's customers, is showing promising early results, with annual sales running at \$15m so far. The plan is eventually to take Newark to continental Europe.

But Mr Pouson still has his work cut out. The reduction in net debt received a one-off boost from the sale of FES and the sub-5 per cent market growth

rate last year is showing only sluggish signs of picking up. So on an admittedly bearish forecast of £15m for the current year, the shares still stand on a high multiple of 16. Uncertainty until sentiment turns more favourable.

### Sorrell finds it pays to advertise

Just weeks after Martin Sorrell raised the question of breaking up his WPP advertising group, Coriant, home of the original Saatchi & Saatchi, yesterday announced it was doing the very same thing. The two companies appear to be travelling in the same direction, but the reality is

that Sorrell seems to have mooted the break-up idea more *pour encourager les autres* as a serious corporate move. He still clearly believes that WPP's head office continues to add value and is not just there to re-order his troops on the battlefield.

Yesterday, reporting sales figures for the opening quarter of 1997, he was pointing out that intra-company ac-

tivities are actually generating £300m in annual revenues.

WPP and Coriant come from a similar heritage. Both found that 1980's acquisition binges turned sour when debt repayment costs soared. Mr Sorrell has brought WPP out of the bleak years in much stronger shape than its rival, but he has had great incentives. Helping WPP to hit pre-tax profits last year by 35 per cent to £153.3m brought him one step further along the road towards an £18m bonus package. But there was only a little to help him yesterday along that path. The shares rose 3p to 250.5p, leaving him still short of that next whack of the bonus, which only kicks in if he keeps the share price above 265p for 60 trading days.

Dented by the strong pound, reported revenues fell from £390m to £387m in the first three months of the year, although like-for-like sales were up 6 per cent. Market research put in a particularly strong performance, with revenues rising 11 per cent, while public relations and media advertising also did well.

The mountain of debt which threatened to topple WPP in the past has halved over the comparable period to just £78m. Gearing is now minimal for

a company with a market capitalisation of £1.85bn. Meanwhile, WPP has just acquired its first European-based Internet company, Syzygy, but this is still small beer.

Analysts expect profits of £175m this year, putting the shares on a multiple of around 17 times prospective earnings. That puts it slightly behind the high-fliers in the sector, but is probably fair for now.

### Mice discovers rich pickings

Last year's hotly contested bid for Blenheim, the exhibition management group, showed just how exciting this market has become for many big media players. And the crowds provide rich pickings for many of the smaller players too. Mice, the designer, manager and maker of displays for exhibitions, has seen its share price more than double from their 3p flotation price in December 1994. Yesterday, they were unchanged at 26.5p for 60 trading days.

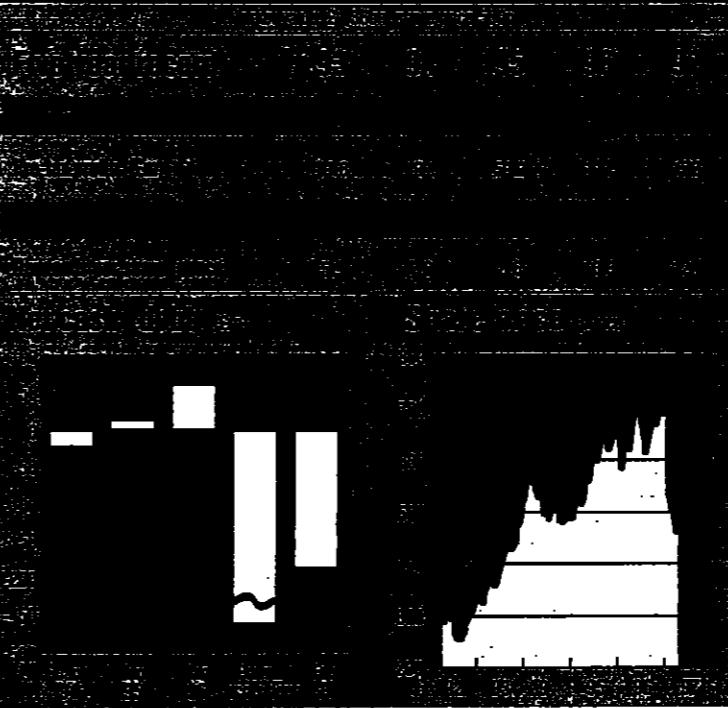
The market's plegmatic reaction came in spite of news that pre-tax profits jumped 50 per cent to £1.23m in the year to December. The latest cracking set of annual results is the third where growth has topped 50 per cent.

The figures got a £235,000 boost from acquisitions and the group is lining up another three purchases. Deals totalling around £750,000 for a small point of sale display company and a design and service company are expected to be completed in the next few days. Further out, the group continues to look for purchases to expand operations in the Benelux countries and Germany. Cash and borrowing facilities give it firepower of up to £3m.

Mice, an acronym for museums, interiors, conferences and exhibitions, sees plenty of scope for market growth. In the UK, it is starting to see the first flowering of the £100m or so pumped into the museums and "heritage" market from National Lottery funds. Once the election uncertainty passes, Mice is also hoping for a boost from the events surrounding the millennium. Meanwhile, it is continuing its thrust abroad, which took it into a record 29 countries in the first quarter of 1997.

The group's confidence is backed by a forward order book topping £10m, including three big exhibits at an Atlanta computer games conference in June. Profits of £1.6m this year would put the shares on a forward multiple of 12. Reasonable value, although the market is tight with chairman Mike Curley and family sitting on 30 per cent.

### Premier Farnell: At a glance



## Andersen to investigate Symonds arm

Symonds yesterday called in Arthur Andersen, the chartered accountancy firm, to investigate what appears to be significant breaches of internal controls at its precision engineering division.

The company said that Ken Garner, managing director of the division, had been dismissed and had been replaced by Patrick Curran.

The further raft of bad news, which followed a profit warning

last month that led to a sharp revision of brokers' forecasts, sent shares in Symonds, which have been in virtual freefall since last autumn, plunging from 47p to 38p. Symonds now expects group pre-tax profits for the first quarter of this year to be even lower than it predicted in its trading update last month.

The decision to call in Arthur Andersen was taken after the company had conducted a thorough internal management

review. A spokesman for Symonds said yesterday: "The directors believe that the management accounts for the precision engineering division do not accurately reflect the performance of the division for the first quarter of 1997."

Arthur Andersen will submit a detailed report on its investigation to the board towards the middle of next month.

Besides investigating and quantifying the effect of the

breaches, the accountancy firm will also make a report on the financial records, internal controls and reporting of the division.

Mr Curran, who is taking charge of the precision engineering operations, only joined



# East Asia's dazzling growth is about to run into trouble

When does the great East Asian run of growth begin to taper off? The region has, over the last 20 years, been the fastest-growing in the world by a large margin, with the result that some parts – Hong Kong and Singapore for example – now have a higher per capita gross domestic product than the OECD average. At some stage, however, this growth is bound to slow. Some countries have been doubling their per capita income every 10 years, something that took the UK and US more than 50 years at a similar stage of their growth, and a rate of growth that mathematically cannot continue.

You can see the slowing growth pattern in the region's richest country, Japan, or for that matter in Europe's richest, Switzerland. Both countries have hit a glass ceiling. But what will be the pattern for the rest of the region, if indeed there is a single pattern?

The question is really a long-term one, but arises this week for a couple of reasons. First, the Merrill Lynch Gallup global survey of fund managers' investment intentions has been becoming increasingly sceptical. You can see that in the graph on the left: the figures show that the world's fund managers are only just not buyers of the Pacific Basin region. True, the region is rather wider than just East Asia, but it does square with a downgrading of that region too.

The other reason is the growing evidence that, while an economic recovery is under way in the region, it is a patchy and uneven one. The East Asian economy is driven by exports to the US and Western Europe to an extraordinary extent. For example exports to the US alone account for one-third of Singapore's GDP and one-quarter of Hong Kong's. So a pause in growth in the OECD region in the second half of 1995 and most of last year hit these countries hard.

There is now a clear recovery in exports, as the graph on the right from JP Morgan shows, but



Hamish McRae

There are substantial risks in the future. One is the dependence on exports of a very narrow range of products

This is patchy. Some countries – China, the Philippines, Taiwan – are doing well; others – Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia – are doing less well.

Assuming the US economy continues to grow and there is a more secure recovery in Western Europe, eventually the whole region's growth will stage a decent cyclical recovery. On a longer view, though, it is at least plausible that the East Asia's high

growth era is over. This possibility has been outlined in a new paper by David Hale, the economist at Zurich Kemper Investments in Chicago.

Hale's thesis runs like this. The region's growth has been dazzling. But there are substantial risks in the future. One is the dependence not just on exports, as noted above, but on a exports of a very narrow range of products. The electronics sector accounts for 51 per cent of Singapore's exports, 44 per cent of Malaysia's, 34 per cent of South Korea's. No less than 20 per cent of South Korea's exports are semiconductor chips.

This leaves these countries vulnerable not just to a fall in prices. One of the main reasons for a sharp rise in Korea's current account deficit last year was the 75 per cent fall in the price of chips as a result of a global glut.

A second area of vulnerability is the need for massive infrastructure investment. The need for such investment has been one of the reasons why, despite very high personal savings, the region is in overall current account deficit. While this is probably manageable without a Latin American-style meltdown, it means that the region does carry risks.

This leads to a third concern: the ability of the region to manage this infrastructure investment wisely, given that it will probably have to pay above-average rates

of return to attract inward capital to finance it.

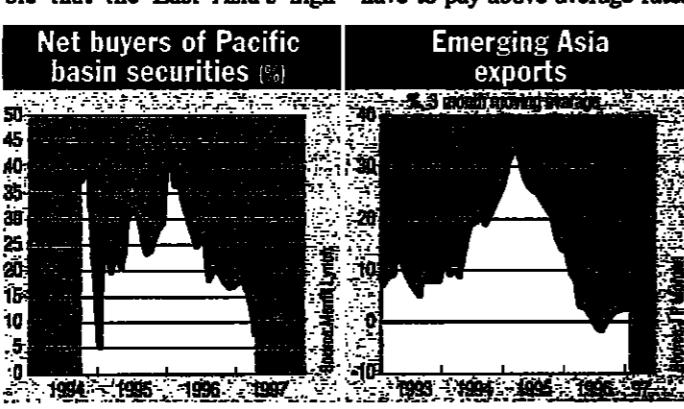
There are concerns, too, as to whether the commercial management of local companies will be sensitive to the changing demand for their products – whether, for example, Chinese companies will be inhibited by government interference.

The region has little experience of shareholder scrutiny, a weakness which may have led to the very low rates of return achieved by Japanese companies. It also has very little experience of using financial markets to allocate capital, something which will have to happen to a much larger extent in future, particularly as an ageing population will within one generation need to accumulate sufficient financial assets to cover its pension needs.

Finally, the region will need to import very large amounts of energy and probably food too. China, for example, will become a large oil importer as its car population grows.

The point here is not to argue that the region is in serious economic trouble. Rather it is to point to reasons why its growth in the future is liable to hit problems, which will have to be tackled. If these are dealt with successfully, then the debate will shift from economics to politics, and the role of the region in the wider world. David Hale believes that these countries will succeed and regain growth momentum in the final years of the century, and he may well be right. But it will not be the astonishingly rapid growth of the last two decades and there will be bumps on the way.

Maybe the main bump will not be economic at all but political. Best candidate? Well, you can round up the usual suspects. The unification of the two Koreas cannot be that far off, but can it be achieved with the smoothness of the unification of the two Germanys? Hong Kong has to demonstrate that its economy can continue to prosper under a change of regime. And after Hong Kong, what happens to Taiwan?



# Budgie the Helicopter flies into a \$22m wrangle

## PEOPLE & BUSINESS

The Duchess of York's creation, Budgie the Little Helicopter, flew into turbulence yesterday as the American marketing agents for the cuddly TV series issued a blood-curdling statement and a demand for \$22m from its British owners, Sleepy Kids.

The row goes back to last spring, when Laney Hachmann & Harris went into Chapter 11, thus prompting Sleepy Kids to look for a new agent in the US. LHH yesterday issued a blistering assault on Sleepy Kids, saying that statements the British company made in 21 October were "improper".

LHH says Sleepy Kids should not have pinned the blame on it for Budgie's non-performance in the US, that its agency contract was not terminated, and that it was still owed \$22m.

No one from Sleepy Kids was available for comment yesterday, but the bluster from LHH certainly didn't disturb the stock market. Sleepy Kids' shares rose 0.5p to 17.5p. Fergie can sleep safely in her four poster for the moment.



Kids' stuff: The Duchess of York is unlikely to be worried

businessman as a crook. We'll probably get sued for it – we've budgeted for that," says Anil.

Tom Rubythorn and Anil used to run *Business Age* until it was bought a couple of years ago by VNU, who changed its format and then closed it down. Anil bought back the title this spring and has resurrected *Sunday Business*'s sales director Charlie Kerr and design director Trudi Roche who also used to work on the old *Business Age*. Whether anyone will make any money out of this musical chairs is another story.

"We have a separate door," says Anil. "Sunday *Business*, I talked to a number of people who had been considering buying into the paper, and they were keen on backing the relaunch of *Business Age* instead.

"We're aiming for a launch sometime in late May, with a circulation of around 50,000. It'll be a 164-page glossy with lots of entertaining controversy. Our first issue will name a well known

businessman as a crook. We'll probably get sued for it – we've budgeted for that," says Anil.

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Ian Shay resigned yesterday as

finance director of Coda Group, the loss-making accounting software supplier. A spokesman for Coda said that the group had redirected the bulk of its operations to the US, and more international

skills were now needed. "Mr Shay

felt he would be better off elsewhere," said the spokesman.

Robert Brown, Coda's chief executive, moved to the East Coast from the UK last year in order to spearhead the group's recovery. "The thinking is that if Coda is going to make it internationally as a supplier of accounting software, then it has to make it in the world's biggest software market," says the spokesman. Meanwhile the search for a new finance director goes on.

The Institute of Chartered Accountants' attempt at a television programme may have sunk in a sea of red ink, but that has not put off the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (Cima), which is now launching its own video service, the Finance Channel.

In the book-keeping equivalent of Red Hot Dutch, the Channel will feature five "modern, lively magazine-style programmes" each month "designed to help accountants in business respond to and forecast business change". I can feel my eyelids getting heavier already.

The channel will be produced at Television Education Network's studios at Channel 4 and will cost a wallet-denuding £82 a month.

Hepworth, the building materials company, says that its chief executive, John Carter, has resigned "for personal reasons". A spokesman says Mr Carter's departure was amicable and based on mutual agreement, and that the former chief executive was leaving to pursue other interests.

Mr Carter is 51 and has been chief executive at Hepworth for five years, having joined the company in 1987. The spokesman denied there was any rupture over strategy or disagreement behind the news. The group has started its search for a replacement.

Mr Carter's resignation comes just ahead of a changeover of the chairmanship, with Jeremy Lancaster to take over as chairman from Sir Roland Smith.

John Willcock

### Foreign Exchange Rates

Country	Sterling	Dollar	D-Mark			
Country	Sterling	1 month	3 months	1 month	3 months	Spot
US	16348	7.5	24.21	1000	-	0.5875
Canada	22330	61.56	170.12	13571	28.28	0.8207
Germany	27520	70.23	207.94	17023	33.31	0.8000
France	23520	20.23	67.04	17023	33.31	0.8000
Italy	27658	22.42	71.94	19218	25.43	0.9380
Japan	20522	56.65	288.29	12553	54.53	175.15
UK	22447	8.50	25.20	14433	11.76	0.9138
Denmark	20322	25.20	72.50	14432	11.76	0.9138
Netherlands	13265	55.77	246.23	19138	39.37	121.16
Portugal	10704	20.04	55.54	12564	11.79	0.9278
Norway	21526	20.20	70.20	17023	33.31	0.8000
Spain	23524	22.53	71.01	14391	22.53	0.8458
Sweden	12467	22.35	64.03	17023	33.31	0.8000
Australia	22585	55.88	246.23	14432	41.16	145.46
Hong Kong	12585	67.35	242.50	17023	41.16	145.46
Malaysia	40963	0.0	0.45	25057	27.30	80.95
New Zealand	23521	25.33	74.65	14412	22.24	65.67
Singapore	23545	0.0	0.45	14402	24.19	70.65

### Interest Rates

Country	5Yr	10Yr	yield %	Country	5Yr	10Yr	yield %
UK	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	Germany	2.50%	5.75%	5.75%
France	3.15%	3.15%	3.15%	US	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%
Intervention	3.15%	3.15%	3.15%	Belgium	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%
Discount	7.5%	7.5%	7.5%	Finland	2.50%	3.00%	3.00%
Netherlands	2.70%	2.70%	2.70%	Switzerland	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%
Advances	2.70%	2.70%	2.70%	Denmark	3.25%	4.00%	4.00%

Yields calculated on local basis.

### Money Market Rates

Country	Overnight	7 Day	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	1 Year
Interbank CDs	5	6	5	6	6	6
Starling CDs	5	6	5	6	6	6
Discounted CDs	5	6	5	6	6	6
Treasury Bills (Buy)	5	6	5	6	6	6
Dollar CDs	5	6	5	6	6	6
ECU United Dep	5	6	5	6	6	6

Yields calculated on local basis.

### Tourist Rates

£ Buys	£ Buys	£ Buys	£ Buys
Australia (Dollars)	2.0425	France (Francs)	9.1180
Austria (Schillings)	19.0500	Germany (Marks)	2.2680
Belgium (Francs)	55.9100	Greece (Drachmas)	430.0000
Canada (Dollars)	2.23		



## sport

# England axe will do James good says Hoddle

GLENN MOORE  
Football Correspondent

**It** may be, to quote a former incumbent, "the impossible job", but an England coach does have some advantages over his club counterparts.

One of those is the luxury of choice and Glenn Hoddle exercised it yesterday. He acted where Roy Evans must delay and dropped David James. While the Liverpool manager has only two novice alternatives to his hapless goalkeeper, Hoddle was able to pick four capped No 1s in the squad to face Georgia in the home World Cup qualifier tomorrow week.

Evans had asked Hoddle to keep faith with his goalkeeper to prevent his confidence from slipping even further, but Hoddle thought a rest from international duty would do James good.

"It was a tough decision but as other goalkeepers are now ahead of David on form it would be difficult to justify keeping him in," Hoddle said.

"I watched him on Saturday and he made a few mistakes as he has been doing recently. I spoke to him afterwards and he can come back. All goalkeepers go through these spells."

There is concern that James needs every encouragement in case his collapse proves as terminal as Mervyn Day's many

years ago, but Hoddle feels sure his form and confidence are not irrecoverable.

"Taking him out of the England set-up might be the right thing to do," he insisted. "It is completely different to the Paul Gascoigne situation [when he was kept in the squad], this is purely a football matter."

Hoddle revealed that Ray Clemence, England's goalkeeping coach, has already visited James at Melwood, Liverpool's training ground, to conduct a goalkeeping clinic with him. Further visits are possible and Clemence is in touch with Joe Corrigan, his former England rival and now Liverpool's goalkeeping coach.

Since Georgia hardly tested

England while being well beaten in Tbilisi, and David Seaman is back from injury, James' absence is more important to the player than England. More relevant for Hoddle is the presence of Alan Shearer.

Assuming neither are injured before next Wednesday, Hoddle will be able to pair Shearer and Seaman at goal. Gary Neville, Sol Campbell, Tony Adams, Gary Pallister, David Beckham and Les Ferdinand are available.

Grasme Le Saux has been retained, although his public discontent at Blackburn means he

is unlikely to play club football for the rest of the season. "At least he will not be injured. I wish a few more would fall out with their club," Hoddle said. "With all but the Newcastle quartet in action this week, he was not entirely joking."

Even with the inevitable withdrawals, England should easily overcome Georgia. Since losing 2-0 at home to England in November, the East Europeans have changed managers without any discernible improvement.

To make way for the newcomers, eight players were either chosen or called-up for last month's win over Mexico have been omitted.

Among them are Matt Le

Tissier, who even Hoddle accepts is injured this time; Dominic Matteo, fit for a change but no longer in the Liverpool side, and Nick Barnby, whose loss of form has finally been noticed. The perpetually injured Darren Anderton is also out, while David May, Stan Collymore and Lee Bowyer, late call-ups last time, will again have to rely on injuries to figure.

Gascoigne, after four days' training and 20 minutes of first-team action, was judged to be not yet ready to return, but Hoddle made it clear he would be back for the trip to Poland in late May.

Another *India '90* veteran may not be so lucky. Despite a return to fitness and goalscor-

## Middlesbrough need to break bad habit

GUY HODGSON

**Y**ou could almost feel sorry for Middlesbrough that no one feels sorry for them. A Premiership club who buy big (£26m) cannot expect much sympathy, but nothing is going right for them. Even the identity of their opponents is confusing again.

In last week's Coca-Cola Cup final, Leicester were portrayed as underdogs, an identity that did not sit entirely comfortably as they are above Boro in the

Premiership table, but for tonight's FA Cup semi-final replay at Hillsborough there is no getting away from the fact: most of the nation is wishing for their demise. Britain is backing Second Division Chesterfield.

"The entire country seems to have taken us to their hearts," John Duncan, the Chesterfield manager, said. "We played at Brentford last week and we got cheered onto the pitch and off the pitch and during the match."

"It was fantastic that they felt associated with our performance and that neutral people were enthralled by us."

Which is hard on Middles-

brough, as their season of promise is collapsing round their ears. Six days ago, Bryan Robson's team were close enough to touch two cups and survival in the Premiership. Now, the Coca-Cola Cup is being toasted in Leicester, and on Saturday their fears of relegation deepened as Sunderland secured a first win on Teesside in 35 years. The identity of the only scorer was almost too cruel - Darren Williams, a former Boro trainee.

The problems do not end there by the Riverside. Alan Moore, the Republic of Ireland winger, is out of tonight's replay with a twisted ankle, sustained in a first-half challenge with Sunderland's Allan Johnston, while there are further doubts over the fitness of Gianluca Festa, Curtis Fleming and the goalkeeper, Mark Schwarzer.

Add the muscle-constricting tension of being the victims of the mother of all shocks should Chesterfield prevail, and Boro's state can be properly quantified. Under normal circumstances, Juninho, Fabrizio Ravanelli and Co would expect to deal with a Second Division side comfortably, but no one could describe what is happening on Teesside as normal.

Certainly not Robson, who hopes the press will lift his team rather than fear suppress it. "We have a really important run-in with a lot to play for," he said.

"The lads will pick themselves up and there is the added bonus that we can still get to another

Second Division side comfortably, but no one could describe what is happening on Teesside as normal.

In 1959, it took another semi-final replay to dispatch the next Third Division FA Cup glory-seekers, Norwich City. They were 2,000-1 for the cup at the start of their campaign, and produced major shocks on their way to meeting Newcastle. In arguably the greatest giant-killing campaign by a Third Division Three, they beat Manchester United and Tottenham of the First Division (3-0 and 1-0, respectively) along the way. After holding Luton to a 1-1 draw at White Hart Lane, they lost 1-0 in the replay at Birmingham City's ground, St Andrew's.

In 1976, Crystal Palace who finished the season third in the Third Division and were promoted, met Second Division semi-final opposition in the form of Southampton. Palace beat Leeds and Chelsea on their way to last four, and their campaign is best remembered for the sight of Malcolm Allison with a fedora on his head and champagne in his hand even in defeat. In a season for giant-killing, Southampton went on to beat Manchester United 1-0 in the final.

The last time a team from the Third contested a semi-final was in 1984. On that occasion, 20,000 supporters travelled from Devon to Birmingham, only to see their team, Plymouth, lose 1-0 to Watford at Villa Park. Earlier in the competition, Plymouth had only progressed to the third round after beating non-League Barking 2-1. In an otherwise poor season, Argyle finished sixth from bottom of their division.

**D**avid Webb recently appeared on Richard Littlejohn's television show *Do I Not Like That*. The Brentford manager gave an assured performance and received a thank you letter from the host, but he won't be going back. Once a distinguished member of football's clattering classes, he is less at ease among the chattering variety.

"I'd never seen the programme," he explains. "I didn't dislike it, but I wouldn't have gone on it if I'd realised, because it was a programme where it was pulling people to pieces. There was a guy who tried to slaughter Ruud Gullit. I wanted to laugh. It makes television, but it doesn't make life better. And that's why it's very difficult to enjoy."

The "it" is football, an increasing burden for Webb. The temptation is to portray the buccaneering hero of Chelsea's 1970 FA Cup triumph as a cheerful cockney. Right now he is about as light-hearted as Brian Mawhinney.

In his fourth season with the club, Webb has kept them in the Second Division's top three for seven months now, but a foiled spring, including Saturday's home defeat by Crewe, has increased the prospect of the dreaded play-offs and left Webb in maudlin mode.

His answer to the first question - what does he enjoy about being a football manager - set the tone. "I've got to say I don't enjoy it. Not any more," he says.

Five weeks ago he offered his resignation after being upset by the abuse he received from the Brentford fans watching their



David Webb: Worn down by the constant barrage of criticism that is a disturbing feature of the modern game

Photograph: Peter Jay

## Webb wilts under burden of abuse

**Matt Tench**  
on the Brentford manager stung by fans' venom

training ground just opposite Kempton Racecourse, the craggy features, with the famous Desperate Dan chin, have a cartoon look. But having turned 51 at the beginning of the month, he could still pass for 10 years younger. Webb needs a shower and has an appointment with his chairman, but shows no signs of being in a hurry.

**'Sometimes I get up and I think: 'Why am I doing this?'**

His disaffection is not with football, just football management. "I like watching football, but being a manager has taken the social side out of it." He has been to only a couple of social games this season but one of those - 10 days ago at Southend - only made it worse.

"I heard the abuse that someone was hurling at Ronnie Whelan, and I thought 'what makes us want to do it?'

Which makes you wonder why Webb still does it. Having offered his resignation more times than your average minister would consider prudent (once, successfully, at Southend; twice, unsuccessfully, at Brentford) it is not as though

he has no alternative. Famously entrepreneurial, he is graduating from being the game's Arthur Daley to its F W Woolworth. "I deal in anything," he says, and he's about to take on 8,000 square feet of warehousing and retailing space in Biffen, Essex.

What's more, the career structure for managers in the lower divisions seems to be crumbling. Webb was in charge at Chelsea for three months, keeping them in the Premiership, and turned down Southampton soon after joining Brentford. But he realises that in football's changed world there might not be another chance to operate at the highest level.

"I look at things like Everton. And I look at the fellah who's done so well at Stockport [David Jones]. He was an old Evertonton, you'd think it would be the first port of call. But you just wonder now, what determines who is a good manager?"

A couple of years ago a chairman asked Webb for advice about who to appoint as his manager. "This was at a time when Jim Smith was out of work. I said 'go and get him, Jim Smith, he knows his way around.' He said 'My people have told me he might be too old.' So they got a young bloke and they got relegated."

Yet for all his weariness Webb is not cynical, and the feel makes him that he will see out a contract that takes him to May 1998. For one thing he still has sympathy for the players. He recalls with a chuckle that, when he joined Chelsea from Southampton nearly 30 years ago, he was prepared to

accept a drop in wages from £85 to £65 a week because it was a step up. That would not happen now, even at Brentford, where only one of his squad has been happy to sign up to the year.

Players have not changed much, though. "Not really. I just think everybody's grown up differently. I could have an old Jag in that day, and I was seen to be doing all right. You get a geezer now, who's on the dole, and he's got an old Jag."

Mind you, an appearance in the play-offs will surely test him. Webb loathes them, which is not exactly the Bees line, as they were pioneered by his chairman, Martin Lange.

"All they do is create disappointment," Webb says, and he is equally unhappy that, with many more important games at the end of the season, the opportunities to blood youngsters are drastically reduced.

"Traditionally this was a time when you said: 'I've got four good young kids, let's give them a game.' I started like that. I played in a game with Colin Bell when he was at Bury, in another Preston when they had Howard Kendall."

Webb's experience in the play-offs two years at Brentford was a bad one, eliminated by a penalty shoot-out when finishing second did not bring automatic promotion because of league restructuring.

"You think, I've just taken all this lovely medicine all year to get yourself better and at the last minute," he clicks his fingers, "oh, and by the way, you're still ill." Webb looks up, the memory a painful one. "That is why you can't enjoy it."

### Third Division FA Cup semi-finalists

1937	Millwall lost 2-1 to Sunderland
Final:	Sunderland beat Preston North End 3-1
1954	Port Vale lost 2-1 to West Bromwich Albion
Final:	West Brom beat Preston North End 3-2
1955	York City lost 2-0 in replay to Newcastle United
Final:	Newcastle beat Manchester City 3-1
1959	Newcastle lost 1-0 in replay to Luton Town
Final:	Nottingham Forest beat Luton 2-1
1976	Crystal Palace lost 2-0 to Southampton
Final:	Southampton beat Manchester Utd 1-0
1984	Plymouth Argyle lost 1-0 to Watford
Final:	Everton beat Watford 2-0

## Compensation threat to Robson's move

ALAN NIXON

Bobby Robson will have to sort out a salary dispute with Barcelona over £250,000 he believes is owed to him - before he joins Everton as their new manager.

The former England manager was officially approached by the Goodison Park chairman, Peter Johnson, with the offer to become Joe Royle's successor at the Merseyside club during weekend talks in Spain.

However Robson will not

leave the Catalan club until he is fully compensated for the 14 months left on his contract as their coach. He is angry that Barcelona have lined up the Ajax coach, Louis van Gaal, for next season.

Although Barcelona have said they want Robson to stay in some capacity, he will take legal action against them for the equivalent of constructive dismissal if he is not paid up, and wants that row settled before he leaves for England.

Nottingham Forest's general

manager, Dave Bassett, has hit back at critics blaming him for the club's plight at the foot of the Premiership. Forest's fortunes have dipped in the last few weeks, with only eight points gained from eight games.

"People might try and say that our results have dipped since I came here and link it to me, but I wasn't around when Forest won only one of their first 15 games this season," Bassett said. "The team has not won enough games and scored enough goals from day one."

## Parkes springs to Sutton's defence

Blackburn Rovers' caretaker manager, Tony Parkes, insisted yesterday that his club should not be taking flak for the manner of their late equaliser at Arsenal on Saturday, writes Alan Nixon.

The Gunners were leading 1-0 when Patrick Vieira kicked the ball into touch in injury-time following an apparent injury to Stephen Hughes. It is one of the game's unwritten rules that possession immediately returned to the side who held it before play stopped, but the

Blackburn striker, Chris Sutton, forced a corner from which Gary Flitcroft equalised.

Parkes' first reaction was not to support this perceived lack of sportsmanship, but yesterday he was keen to defend his men. He said: "It's quite wrong that all the blame should be laid at our door, for the situation revolving around throw-ins has gone full circle. Now there is definitely an element of time-wasting creeping in. The Arsenal player didn't have a serious injury, he had cramp.

Ron Atkinson is a contender to take over from Lou Macari as the manager of Stoke City. Atkinson is poised to leave his supervisory role at Coventry City at the end of the season.

Stoke's chairman, Peter Coates, will consult his board, but he is known to favour Oxford United's Denis Smith, a former Stoke defender.

Smith was a visitor to Stoke's game at the weekend, and he could be persuaded to move to the Potteries this time after turning down the job in the past.



**James dropped**  
Blunders cost Liverpool keeper his place in England squad, page 26

# sport

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## Webb wilts

Brentford's manager stung by fans' abuse, page 26



O'Sullivan: 'I was shaking like a leaf. I was in bits'

## O'Sullivan aims to realise maximum potential

### Snooker

GUY HODGSON

As Ronnie O'Sullivan played his first ball in the 14th frame of his match against Mick Price yesterday, he declined to go for a difficult red, thinking: "I'm quite enjoying playing snooker at the moment." Five minutes and 20 seconds later he had scored the fastest maximum ever in tournament snooker.

Safety first, devastation second as 36 balls were potted in 320 seconds. It worked out at one every nine seconds and, adding the £147,000 prize

for the 147 clearance to £18,000 for the highest break at the Embassy World Championship, £515 per second of the frame.

It was the fourth maximum at the world championship and the latest in a list of remarkable feats from a 21-year-old who, the six-times world champion Stephen Hendry's remarkable record notwithstanding, is the outstanding personality in snooker. Last year he disgraced himself at the Crucible by assaulting a press officer; this year he has hit the headlines for the right reasons.

"I thought it was on when I got to the second red," O'Sullivan

said after his 10-6 first-round victory over Price. "I was in the balls and all I could think was max."

After his one safety shot, O'Sullivan relentlessly potted ball after ball, going out of position only once when he nearly snookered himself on the penultimate red with the pink. Just enough of the ball was showing, however, and once that dropped the rest was a formality.

The pace was astounding, the total time for the break being one minute and 49 seconds faster than the previous best, set by Thailand's James Wattana in the 1992 British Open. "If I had

stopped and thought I'd have probably missed," O'Sullivan said, "I was shaking like a leaf. I was in bits. But I thought: 'If I stop you're just going to break the rhythm.' At one point O'Sullivan dropped his chalk, leaving it behind in his hurry to complete the frame.

The maximum follows a turbulent season for O'Sullivan which has included two tournament victories and an outburst at the European Open in Malta last month when he announced he wanted to give up the sport. Typically, he withdrew the comment at the next event, saying:

"People should take with a pinch of salt some of the things I say ... It wasn't the first time I said I was going to quit and I don't suppose it will be the last."

If that points to a remarkable young man finding fame hard to handle, then the impression is correct. The world No 8 from Chigwell, Essex, got his first 100 break at 10 and at 17 became the youngest winner of an international professional tournament. This coincided with his father being given a life sentence for murder.

The resulting publicity would have affected the most stable of

personalities and 12 months ago his career appeared to be heading for oblivion. He received a suspended two-year ban and a £20,000 fine after the assault in Sheffield. He then vowed to become a "model professional and an ambassador for the game."

His threat to retire did not accord with that ambition but since then he has taken up running and lost weight. "I'm practising harder now than I have for four or five years," he said yesterday. "I was like that in my amateur days but since I turned pro it nearly did my brain

in. Snooker wasn't the most important thing in my life."

"I'm coming to terms with things. I'm 21 and a man now and I have to start acting like a one. I had to get it together. I was out of order last year. I've admitted that. Now it's the real me."

The real Ronnie is not easy to locate, but if O'Sullivan could realise his potential, he would be the natural successor to Hendry, whom he is scheduled to meet in the quarter-finals. "I'm here to win the tournament," he said yesterday. "The maximum is history now. It is in all senses of the word."

## Swinburn's career in the balance

### Racing

GREG WOOD

The riding career of Walter Swinburn, which has included a Derby winner and a near-fatal accident in the last two years alone, took a new turn yesterday when the jockey announced his intention to take "a sabbatical from race-riding". The 35-year-old rider said that his decision was the result of a "continuing weight problem", but he added that "it is certainly not on my mind to retire altogether".

In a statement, Swinburn said: "I am taking this step in the long-term interests of my career. I would not be fair to myself or anyone else if I did not give my body or my metabolism a chance to settle down, and it has significantly failed to do that over recent months, in spite of rigid adherence to a medically supervised diet."

Swinburn's announcement prompted complete astonishment throughout racing, not simply because of its substance, but also as a result of its timing. On Saturday week, he had been due to partner the most highly regarded horse of his generation, Entrepreneur, in the 2,000 Guineas, the first Classic of the season. Entrepreneur is already the ante-post favourite for the Derby, an event which Swinburn has won three times, most memorably on Shergar when he was just 19 years old.

Like Shergar, Entrepreneur is trained by Michael Stoute, who stood by Swinburn when many felt he was too young and inexperienced to ride a Derby favourite, and has been his most significant employer ever since. "Naturally I am hugely disappointed to be forced into making this decision," the jockey



Swinburn: Weight problems

added, "particularly when the year appears to hold so much promise for [Michael Stoute's] horses. I wish Mr Stoute and everyone at Freemason's Lodge a hugely successful year and hope that it is not too long before I am once again playing a significant part in the story."

Stoute, too, expressed his

regret at yesterday's news. "I have been very aware that life has been a struggle for him recently," the trainer said, "and I look forward to him coming back when the problem is un-

der control, when he will most certainly have my full support."

Away from the track, Swinburn has not always lived up to his nickname of "the Chocboy", and last month he was fined £500 in compensation after admitting an assault on a Newmarket restaurateur. During the proceedings, Swinburn admitted to suffering from an eating disorder which reduced his tolerance to alcohol, but when he returned to riding at Nottingham a fortnight later, there was little indication that anything but a full campaign lay before him.

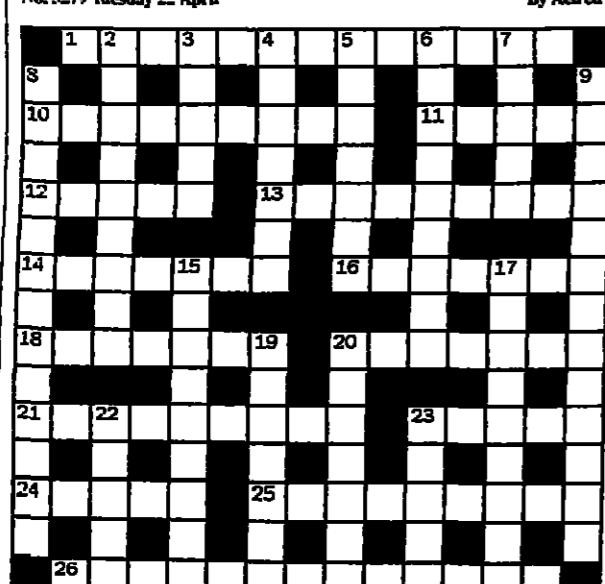
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### THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3279 Tuesday 22 April

By Astred

Monday's Solutions



SQUASH HEDDINGTON  
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OLDSMSECE  
GREENTEA RHEA  
TLEIS A E  
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SICU INSTITUTE  
NNNSESEA  
TOUCHGUY THRONG

Monday's Solutions

### Football

TOMMY STANIFORTH

Rund Gullit has beaten off competition from Juventus, Internazionale and Deportivo La Coruna to sign the Nigerian international Celestine Babayaro from the Belgian club, Anderlecht, in a £2.5m deal.

Babayaro, who will not be 19 until August, will stay with Anderlecht for the rest of the season and arrive at Stamford Bridge in the summer, after signing a five-year contract with the FA Cup finalists. He will become

their latest member of Gullit's growing number of foreigners at Chelsea, joining (among others) Italy's Gianfranco Zola and Gianluca Vialli, Romania's Dan Petrescu and the Frenchman, Franck Leboeuf.

Babayaro, a left wing-back who won an Olympic gold medal for Nigeria in the USA last summer and scored one of

their goals in the final, has been with Anderlecht from the age of 15. He has been pursued by Europe's top clubs after many impressive performances over the last two seasons.

However, Gullit's reputation

persuaded him to join Chelsea, whose managing director, Colin Hutchison, flew to Belgium to complete the deal.

"I told Rund I wanted to sign for Chelsea after only two conversations on the telephone," Babayaro said. "I am very happy he wants me in his team and I am looking forward to a great season with Chelsea."

Babayaro has never been to London and will need a British work permit to complete his move to Stamford Bridge. He watched Chelsea's FA Cup semi-final win over Wimbledon on television.

## Gullit adds Babayaro to his foreign legion

### MORSE

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## Monaco's mountain to climb

Monaco must find their best form if they are to overcome internationale in the second leg of their Uefa Cup semi-final tonight.

The French champions-elect, who had won all their previous away legs in this season's competition, played poorly and lost 3-1 in the first leg in Italy two weeks ago.

Monaco, on the verge of their sixth French league title, found their game in the second half in Milan and scored what could prove to be a crucial goal from a substitute, the Nigerian striker Victor Ikpeba - their top scorer with six goals in the competition.

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Ikpeba will rely on the vet-

eran Enzo Scifo, who returns to his first club Anderlecht at the end of the season, to dictate play against another of his former clubs.

Inter, whose priority is one of

Italy's top clubs, will look to

close all the gaps in defence to

avoid conceding the early goal.

Inter were encouraged by a

2-1 away win against Cagliari on

Saturday but also by Udinese's

2-0 defeat of Parma which left

them third in Serie A with just

six games to play and a place in

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possibility.

Inter's experienced captain,

Giuseppe Bergomi, said: "It

was a big boost for us to win at

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